

~~Our Beautiful Homeland~~: Ideology, Propaganda and Mass
Culture in the Independent State of Croatia, 1941-1945

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This thesis examines the ideology of the Ustasha Movement which ruled the Independent State of Croatia between 1941 and 1945, considering the way in which it used popular culture to consolidate its rule and legitimise its policies. It begins with a survey of historiographical and literary treatments of the Ustashes as a starting point to explore the main themes of the Ustasha ideology (ustaštvo). These were ideas it had in common with other fascist and ultra-nationalist movements in Europe. However, this thesis argues that while the Ustasha Movement drew its ideology from a number of different sources including Yugoslavism, fascism and National Socialism, its main source of ideological inspiration came from ideas deeply rooted in traditional Croatian nationalism. The fact that Ustasha ideology was at least partly grounded in popular prejudices and national myths means that the extent of support the Ustashes enjoyed from the masses and their relationship with them needs to be reconsidered. Often the Ustashes have been portrayed as an extreme political phenomenon with little following. This thesis contends that the Ustasha Movement had not only more support among the population than has hitherto been suggested, but that the Ustashes, far from being a marginal group of outsiders, represented simply the most extreme expression of a mainstream nationalist consensus. To be successful, propaganda needs to reflect existing social values. In the Ustashes' case, their ideology also reflected prevailing aesthetic values. Although the Ustashes' propaganda was grounded in a utilitarian appropriation of national myths, ceremonies and traditions, their radical, modernising ideas and apocalyptic rhetoric gained them the support of leading artists in Croatia too. The desire to create an exclusivist Croatian culture was not, therefore, restricted to the Ustashes, but was a widely-held national goal.

CONTENTS

Preface and Acknowledgements	5
Introduction	10
1. National Revolution as Final Solution: Serbs, Jews and Muslims in the Ustasha State	44
2. The Revolutionary Commissars of the New Generation: Ustasha Youth and their Myths of Radicalism	110
3. The New Ustasha Man and Woman: Propaganda and Revolutionary Personae	159
4. Martyrs and Warriors: Catholicism, Religious Imagery and the Apocalyptic Cults of the Ustasha Movement	204
5. Ustasha Visions: Art, Literature and Mass Culture in the Independent State of Croatia	252
Conclusion	306
Bibliography	320

TABLES AND ANALYTICAL MODELS

1.1 Structures of Power in the Independent State of Croatia	347
1.2 Casualties Among the Major Ethnic Groups, in the	350

Independent State of Croatia

1.3 Analytical Models of Political Evolution in the Ustasha 351
Movement and *Spremnost* Newspaper

Preface and Acknowledgements

It is now sixty years since American and British soldiers landed on the beaches of Normandy and began a process which would lead to the liberation of mainland Europe from Nazi rule. In Britain, which between 1939 and 1941 stood alone against the Third Reich as the rest of Europe fell under the control or spell (or sometimes both) of fascism and Nazism, the Second World War continues to exude a grim fascination on the media and politicians. This fascination is usually inextricably bound up with images of the Holocaust. War museums hold exhibitions detailing the horrific reality of life in Dachau and Auschwitz; politicians use the imagery of the Final Solution and Nazism to call for military intervention in faraway countries; tabloid newspapers raise the spectre of the brutal German soldier as a means of rousing the nation on the eve of international soccer clashes and no television schedule would be complete without at least one mini-series dramatising the British war experience. Despite this obsession, understanding of the origins, causes and ideology of fascism and Nazism and hence the roots of the Second World War and the Holocaust remains at best superficial among the general population. As regards the course of the Second World War in eastern Europe, one of the principle battlegrounds between 1939 and 1945, even less seems to be publicly known.

This thesis is a study of a fascist movement in eastern Europe between 1941 and 1945 and the way in which it used mass culture as a propaganda tool to justify its rule and genocidal policies. The Croatian Ustasha Revolutionary Movement, like the Nazi regime, was notorious in post-war Yugoslavia for the orchestrated campaign of extermination and terror it instigated against what it considered to be alien and dangerous populations, primarily Serbs, Jews and gypsies. It aimed to create a Greater Croatia cleansed of all non-Croats. By the time Croatia was liberated from its rule in 1945, its élite shock troops had unsystematically murdered hundreds of thousands of civilians, including large numbers of children. Excepting the Nazi camps of eastern Europe, it erected

the largest concentration camp on the Continent and indeed the sadism and cruelty of the Movement shocked even hardened Nazi commanders who wrote of the members of the Ustasha Movement increasingly with disgust. Months before the Wannsee Conference was even convened, the regime in Croatia had already inaugurated its own self-willed Holocaust. Despite its notoreity, the Ustasha Movement only entered public consciousness in the West during the early stages of the war of secession in Yugoslavia in the 1990s as a means of explaining the bloodshed in Bosnia and Croatia. Henceforth, as ethnic Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia were evermore identified by the Western media, rightly or wrongly, as the aggressors in the Yugoslav war, the legacy of the Ustashes disappeared from the discussion.

Very little has been written about the Ustashes in the English language, despite their infamy. In Communist Yugoslavia, the Ustashes were portrayed as a fringe movement of fanatics and fascist war criminals with no popular support. In post-communist Croatia, by contrast, nationalist historians and intellectuals argued that the crimes of the Ustashes were exaggerated and used as a weapon of propaganda by the Communist authorities to discredit the Croatian nationalist movement. Moreover, they argued, the Ustashes might have been fascists but they also brought Croatia its independence. Such arguments were extremely offensive to many Serb historians (as well as, it must be said, Holocaust scholars). Yet their reply – to focus almost solely on the genocidal aspects of Ustasha rule in Croatia between 1941 and 1945 to the exclusion of almost everything else – told us nothing new.

The relationship between regimes of the far-right and mass culture in the period between 1919-1945 is a subject which is now very popular. In recent years, the fixation with Nazi and fascist culture has been open to criticism: some historians and scholars have argued that concentrating on culture avoids dealing with the essence of fascism – its destructive violence and, especially, the Holocaust of millions of Jews, gypsies, Slavs and others. What, scholars have asked, can novels, films and paintings tell us about this? Cultural historians would no doubt answer that looking at the way in fascist regimes represented their ideology to the masses allows us to understand how fascists saw themselves and the world around them. This thesis aims to show not only how the Ustashes saw the world around them, but also how they used that

vision to legitimise to the Croatian public their campaign of genocide. In post-1945 western European states such as France and Italy, as much as in Communist states, national mythologies were created in which fascism was portrayed as a freakish aberration, unique to its time and place, rejected by the vast majority of citizens. This interpretation, deemed necessary in the attempt to achieve national reconciliation and build new cohesive societies, was no more true in Vichy France or fascist Italy than it was for the Independent State of Croatia. This thesis' examination of the manner in which the Ustasha Movement used mass culture, drawing on popular prejudices and national traditions, shows that the ideology of the Ustashas, as with European fascist movements generally, had more popular support than is usually supposed. By the time the Ustashas came to power in 1941, they were at the radical edge of a mainstream national consensus and many of their ideas about the nation and the state owed as much to the writings of nineteenth-century Croatian nationalist writers as they did to Benito Mussolini or Adolf Hitler.

As I began to write the final substantive draft of this thesis, the Yugoslav province of Kosovo was engulfed by a wave of ethnically-motivated pogroms. Albanian nationalist extremists attacked Serb villages, burning churches and monasteries to the ground, killing civilians and causing whole populations to flee. The cause of the outbreak of violence – a sensational, and, as it turned out, completely false story about the brutal murder of three young Albanian boys by a Serb man, nonetheless seized on by Kosovo Albanian media eager to enflame public opinion against the Serb minority and to legitimise a campaign of ethnic hatred – is a depressingly familiar one. Such an episode would have seemed familiar to Jews living in nineteenth-century Tsarist Russia or 1930s Germany. It would also have seemed familiar to Serbs, Jews and Gypsies living in the Croatia of the early 1940s. The events in Kosovo demonstrated yet again the enduring and dangerous power of propaganda as a weapon of war and even terror if unleashed in a receptive atmosphere. Although this thesis is a study of a period in the past, as recent events in the Balkans have shown, where history was deliberately evoked as a weapon of war, it has contemporary resonance.

The conception, research, writing and completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the assistance, advice, and in many cases friendship, of a number of individuals. In the course of writing a book, most historians accumulate so many favours that it is a wonder that they have any friends left at the end of the process. I hope I will be forgiven if I have inadvertently omitted to thank any individuals by name. First and foremost, Peter Siani-Davies of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London has made an invaluable contribution to my thesis. Not only has he been extremely supportive towards me in every step of my thesis and made many important suggestions which have aided the clarity of my central argument, but he has also been unfailingly kind, considerate and tolerant. At numerous points in the evolution of my thesis, when I despaired of ever completing it, he never lost faith. My sincere thanks are also due to Rebecca Haynes and Martyn Rady for their early interest in my work and their encouraging remarks, above and beyond the call of duty. Rebecca Haynes, in particular, not only read drafts of my manuscript, making many judicious observations, but also arranged for me to present research papers in both the initial and late stages of my research, which helped me clarify and develop my ideas profoundly. Wendy Bracewell of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies was enormously encouraging of my thesis in its early stages. A debt of gratitude is also due to my colleagues at the Office for Criminal Justice Reform at the Home Office and, latterly, at the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for their interest in my work as well as their good humour. I am particularly grateful to Tim Cheeseman, Mike Marriott and Julian Owen for allowing me to take extended periods of study leave to research and write up my thesis.

In Croatia, which I visited for research purposes in the winter of 2003, I would like to thank the staff of the Croatian State Archives and the National University Library for their kindness and helpful attitude. Not only did they locate many rare journals and documents, but they also heroically dealt with my requests for books and journals concerning a movement still deeply controversial in their country. I would especially like to thank Boris Suljagić of the Croatian State Archives for his unfailing good cheer and friendship throughout the months I spent in Zagreb. I should also like to thank the many

individuals in Zagreb and elsewhere with whom I enjoyed stimulating conversations and exchanges of opinions. They are too numerous to mention. I am grateful to them all. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their understanding and support during the researching and writing of my thesis. I only hope they will think that the thesis I have produced was worth the effort.

Introduction

On 10 April 1944, the Independent State of Croatia celebrated the third anniversary of its founding. Speeches were given; poems and songs were written in honour of the great event; processions and ceremonies were performed. According to one programme of events to mark the great day, “10 April is a great day of celebration and freedom. On this day, the beauty and greatness of priceless freedom passes before the eyes of every Croat, something which merits every sacrifice and calls for the unquestioning endurance of all suffering.”¹ The highlight of the programme was an operetta about the life of King Tomislav, whose medieval kingdom the rulers of the Independent State of Croatia believed they had recreated. Yet by the time baritones were singing about the ecstasy of independence, the rulers of the State in the name of the State had murdered more than half a million of its inhabitants. Such were the ambiguities of the rule of the Ustasha Movement.

The political ideology of the Revolutionary Croatian Ustasha Organisation which founded and ruled the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* – NDH) from 1941 to 1945 was Janus-faced. On the one hand, the Ustasas saw themselves as an élite body of patriotic fighting men struggling for an independent Croatian state. To achieve this aim, they were prepared to employ the most uncompromising methods necessary, including genocide.² This is the familiar image of the Movement.³ Yet there was another side to the Ustasas which was been little discussed: the importance their ideology placed on cultural concerns. In fact, Ustasha ideology was permeated by notions of culture as a civilising mission. In the years before they came to power, Ustasha leaders often stressed that their movement was one of culture which sought to liberate the Croatian people from the barbarism and backwardness of their Serbian oppressors.⁴ Once in power, this idea of culture as civilisation became an integral state ideology. Ustasha activists demanded a cultural revolution to create a “new Croatian national consciousness and feeling.” After the liberation of the Croatian nation in 1941, they argued, culture should be used to create a New Croatian

Person. For such writers, the first revolution of the Ustasha seizure of power was to be followed by a cultural war, the “second revolution.”⁵

Conventional wisdom might suggest that fascism and culture as civilisation do not belong together. The novelist Thomas Mann wrote of the Nazis as “heralds of a world-rejuvenating barbarism” and the Hitler regime as a “dictatorship of the scum of the earth.”⁶ The definitive statement on the relationship between the two was summed up by the Nazi who exclaimed: “When I hear the word culture I reach for my revolver!”⁷ Yet fascist parties in Europe were above all national parties with national ideologies. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that they gave primacy to notions of culture. As Anthony Smith and Ernest Gellner have argued, nationalist regimes institute a “cultural and educational revolution” in which ecclesiastical authority and tradition are replaced by the new deity of the state. Culture thus becomes “the necessary shared medium, the lifeblood or, perhaps, rather the minimal shared atmosphere with which alone the members of the society can breathe and survive and produce.”⁸

This thesis considers how the Ustasha Movement used the idea of culture as a civilising tool in the Independent State of Croatia to legitimate their rule, their policies and their cult of the Croatian nation and state. It examines the way in which mass culture - novels, poems, paintings, plays – were utilised to support their vision of a new society in which the nation would be remade, relations between the sexes and classes reinvented and ageing democratic notions replaced by the energy of youth. It also examines the extent to which the Ustasha Movement’s ideology and ideas about culture were influenced by its predecessor, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. To a lesser extent, it also considers to what extent the cultural notions of the Ustashes were appropriated by the Communist post-war Yugoslav state. When the Ustashes talked about culture, they did not just mean the rituals, and festivals, art and literature, symbols and monuments through which societies and individuals represent the world about them.⁹ For the Ustashes, culture also signified a code of conduct by which the nation lived. For intellectuals like Julije Makanec, minister of education in the Independent State of Croatia, Croatia through virtue of its traditions and history, its Catholicism as

well as its geo-political position and alliances, belonged to the culture of the West and of Europe. Croatia, he wrote, had been developing for one thousand years in the heart of Europe; only by retaining its western European culture and resisting the Asian culture of the East could it survive. The Ustashas, he wrote, were fighting for the Europe of Sophocles, Plato, Dante, Ruder-Bošković, Pascal and Goethe.¹⁰

A key problem in studying the Ustashas is the availability of archival sources. Partly this reflects the fact that the State the Ustashas created in 1941 operated more through oral commands than written ones. Unlike other totalitarian regimes of the 1930s and 1940s, the Ustasha Movement was not a particularly theoretical movement; as men of action not words, the Ustashas viewed verbosity with scorn and suspicion. Practical considerations also played a role: throughout the existence of the State, there was a shortage of paper and its use strictly rationed. Moreover, many of the archival records which did exist were destroyed during the liberation of Croatia 1945, either accidentally as a result of the general upheaval and the Allied bombing or deliberately as part of the Communists' process of national reconciliation. Since this thesis examines mass culture and propaganda, it tells the story of the public face of the Ustasha regime not the private decisions made among its leaders behind closed doors; it is not interested so much in how or what decisions were arrived at but how they were justified to the masses. For any thesis dealing with public communication, propaganda and mass culture, cultural journals, literature and visual art can often tell us far more than archival sources. This is especially true in the case of the Ustasha Movement which communicated to the masses through language steeped in Manichean opposites. Archival sources have been used mainly for the purposes of putting this public face into context.

Beginning with a study of ideology and the use of culture in the first Yugoslavia and ending with some thoughts on ideology and culture in the last, this thesis argues that there was a continuity of ideology reflected in the popular culture of all three states. This was based on heroism, martyrdom, utopianism and, above all, the glorification of youthful radicalism. It is no coincidence that many

Ustashas began life as zealous Yugoslavs or ended it as committed Communists.¹¹ Like the Ustashas, Communist and Yugoslavist youth engaged in terrorist activity against the state and would commit suicide to evade capture by the authorities. Nor was this phenomenon unique to Yugoslavia since elsewhere in Europe, politically-engaged youth alternated between seemingly contradictory political extremes. Disaffection with the ideology of Yugoslavism, which rapidly abandoned its revolutionary political aims and ideals, led youths to divert their energies into the more dynamic Communist and Ustasha movements. Indeed, running through the anti-Serb and anti-Yugoslav rhetoric of the Ustashas there is a discourse of disillusion and disappointment and a palpable sense that they had been betrayed by Yugoslavism. This started with the leader of the Ustashas himself, Ante Pavelić, an early Yugoslavist, and went right down to the grassroots members.¹² Through an examination of the manner in which ideological aims were represented in popular culture and propaganda, we can gain an insight into the way in which the Ustashas saw the world and themselves. This thesis contends that the ideology of the Ustashas drew on influences from Croatian nationalism, contemporary political ideas such as Nazism and fascism, as well as Yugoslavism to create something which the Ustashas considered to be uniquely Croatian. It aims to show that the Ustasha movement was revolutionary, insofar as the national revolution it inaugurated, couched in anti-bourgeois rhetoric and implemented through the medium of genocide, in fact led to a social revolution. To be successful, political propaganda needs two elements: a population which has been psychologically prepared for its message and an ideology rooted in existing ideas.¹³ This thesis therefore argues that the growing popularity of the Ustashas in the nationalist atmosphere of Croatia in the 1930s and the initial popularity which greeted them when they came to power in 1941 reflected the fact that neither they nor their ideology can be considered politically marginal. On the contrary, they were simply the extremist expression of a mainstream national consensus.

Variations on a Theme: the Ustashas as History in the Socialist State

Many historians argue that the Ustasha Movement was a classic example of an East European native fascist movement – an ultra nationalistic and populist East European political movement which was heavily influenced by the ideologies of fascism and Nazism.¹⁴ As an émigré organisation living in Italy and Germany in the 1930s and financed by the fascist and Nazi regimes, they were exposed to the ideologies of those two states at first hand.¹⁵ Like most native fascist movements in inter-war Europe, the Ustashas consistently denied that they took all or any of their ideology from fascism and National Socialism – explaining that in the same way that fascism was a specifically Italian phenomena and Nazism a genetically German philosophy, their Ustasha ideology (ustaštvo) was a uniquely national belief structure rooted in traditional Croat nationalism.¹⁶ Although this was partly true, the influence of fascism and Nazism on the thinking of the Ustashas, especially after they came to power, is clear.

Since the 1920s, scholars have been arguing about the nature of fascism, its origins and sources of support, its core ideology – indeed, whether it actually had an ideology – and its relationship to both nationalism and Nazism.¹⁷ In recent decades, some historians, such as Ze'ev Sternhell, have come to see fascism as a revolutionary cultural rebellion against rationalism, liberalism and parliamentary democracy, arguing that its origins were to be found in syndicalist and anarchist factions of the left, not the right, who were increasingly tired of the conservatism of the labour and socialist movements as well as the working-class itself and wanted revolution, no matter what its shape or form. To this “heroic and violent culture” was added the aesthetics of Futurism which advocated iconoclasm and the destruction of bourgeois values.¹⁸ The idea that fascism was a revolutionary movement of the left and a cultural rebellion against conformist societal values has been the subject of an enormous number of studies.¹⁹ Already in the 1930s, that astute critic of fascism and Nazism, Walter Benjamin, was observing that

fascism used aesthetics and popular culture as a means of making the masses believe that they were actively involved in the fascist revolution when they were not. Its symbols, festivals and ceremonies served to mask its reactionary nature. Fascism was, he wrote, famously, "the aestheticisation of politics."²⁰ Perhaps George Mosse most eloquently expressed the need to view fascism as an attempt to create a cultural revolution. "Fascism considered as a cultural movement," he wrote, "means seeing fascism as it saw itself and as its followers saw it, to attempt to understand the movement on its own terms. Only then, when we have grasped fascism from the inside out, can we truly judge its appeal and its power."²¹

In 1958, Franz Roh commented of National Socialist art that little worthwhile emerged from the period. "To a great extent, National Socialist art was a foreign element which does not deserve to be discussed."²² Such a view of public culture under fascism and Nazism persists until this day amongst some scholars: provincial, mediocre, derivative and insignificant are four common adjectives which have been used to describe it.²³ Some scholars have also portrayed popular culture in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany as essentially an authoritarian extension of political power. According to Igor Golumstock, art and culture in the fascist states was totalitarian and totalitarian art by definition attempted to eliminate all artistic expression which did not fit. Not only did fascist states see art as an ideological and utilitarian weapon of the control of the masses, but they invariably adopted the most conservative form of art as the official art movement in order to appeal to as wide a spectrum of the population as possible.²⁴

Other studies have adopted a diametrically opposed view of fascism's attitude to popular and mass culture. Far from promoting a mediocre type of mass culture, fascists, it has been argued, were at the forefront of the making of a new modernist and experimentalist culture; some have gone as far as to suggest that fascist art paved the way for many of the great cultural movements, such as Italian social realist cinema.²⁵ They have disputed too the contention that fascist ideas about culture were totalitarian and monolithic, arguing that in Italian Fascism, popular culture was heterogeneous and pluralistic as were many of the artists who contributed to the fascist vision. Far from being silenced, and acting

as the timid mouthpieces of the regime, artists continued to produce work that both explicitly and implicitly criticised those in power.²⁶ Fascism, as a cultural movement, has, in recent years, increasingly been interpreted as a vehicle of modernisation and national unity. According to this line of reasoning, fascism's ceremonies, rituals, its mass manifestations and public spectacles and rallies were used as a means of creating a new unified classless identity for citizens in multi-national states in which formal unification had only occurred relatively recently and in which class divisions and regional identities were perceived as holding back the social and economic progress of the nation.²⁷

The Insurgent—Croatian Revolutionary Organisation (Ustaša—Hrvatska revolucionarna organizacija) was formed in 1928 by a group of nationalist students at the University of Zagreb who had gathered under the leadership of Ante Pavelić and Gustav Perčec. Pavelić, a deputy for the Croatian Party of Right (Hrvatska stranka prava—HSP) in the Yugoslav Skupština, had earlier had a reputation as a proponent of Yugoslavism. As a member of the Croatian National Council at the founding of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, he advocated national oneness, opposed dual Croatian institutions and had claimed Starčević as a prophet of Yugoslavism. In 1925, as a rising member of the HSP he had led negotiations with Nikola Pašić's Radical Party (Radikalna stranka—RS) which would have seen the HSP become the Croatian branch of the Radical Party in Zagreb and King Aleksandar accede to King Zvonimir's throne. In return, Croatia would be afforded cultural and political autonomy. Such policies, Pavelić contended, were the only way to prevent the betrayal of the Croatian national cause.²⁸ However, negotiations broke down and the assassination of Stjepan Radić, leader of the Croatian Peasant Party (Hrvatska seljačka stranka—HSS) in June 1928, and the decision of King Aleksandar in the aftermath of the assassination to declare a dictatorship, rendered a reconciliation between nationalist Serbian and Croatian politicians impossible. The assassination and bloody student protests which followed signalled to Croat nationalists that peaceful methods would not achieve their aim of an independent state and the

Ustasha Movement was formed to fight with violence for a free Croatia. The Ustasha movement was not the first insurrectionary anti-Yugoslav movement to be founded. In 1920, émigrés from the extreme Pure Party of Rights, led by Ivica Frank and Captain Josip Metzger, had formed the paramilitary organisation, the Croat Legion, in Budapest, Hungary. Claiming thousands of young members, they vowed to fry Serbs in boiling oil. However, it was the first insurrectionary group to be taken seriously by the Yugoslavs.²⁹

Shortly after forming the group, Pavelić, Perčec and their followers fled the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and settled in a number of European countries, including Italy and Hungary. Camps were established for the military training of Ustasha recruits and a propaganda centre run by young intellectual nationalists such as Branimir Jelić and Mladen Lorković was founded in Berlin. The focus of Ustasha activity was the training camps, especially the camp in Italy, since it was there that not only the Poglavnik settled but also where the seat of the future Ustasha government—the Main Ustasha Headquarters—was situated. From these Headquarters, commands were issued, propaganda leaflets and newspapers printed, plans formulated and the tenets of the Movement (the Ustasha Principles) transcribed. The camps themselves were run on strict military lines and all recruits were obliged to take an oath of loyalty to both the movement and the Poglavnik: the penalty for violating it was death and disputes, hunger, fights, killings and even suicide among recruits were common.³⁰ The social membership of the Ustasha movement abroad (the so-called émigré Ustashas) reflected the structure of other fascist movements in Eastern Europe. Although there were students and intellectuals in the émigré movement, these tended to be found amongst the leading cadres. In the rank and file of the movement, workers, peasants and sailors predominated.³¹ Amongst activists of the Ustasha movement who stayed in Yugoslavia to conduct political activities (the so-called home Ustashas), however, there was a high number of intellectuals and students. Generally, home Ustashas were relatively less ideologically extreme than their émigré comrades and more cerebral; for their part, the émigré Ustasha faction (the Ras) looked on the home Ustashas as overly-intellectualised and far from

being “real” Ustasha men. Whilst the home Ustashes engaged in protests and wrote furious leaflets against the Yugoslav state, only very rarely did their methods become explicitly terrorist. This was in contrast to the émigré Ustashes who embarked on a campaign of violent insurrection against the state. From the early 1930s, a wave of terrorist attacks convulsed Yugoslavia, culminating in the assassination of King Aleksandar in Marseilles in 1934 by a member of the nationalist Macedonian organisation, (The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation – IMRO) working with the Ustashes. Although the majority of terrorist attacks targeted prominent regime supporters, the Ustashes did not shrink from killing innocent civilians. Ustashes were also prepared to sacrifice their own lives in the pursuit of an independent state of Croatia. In a failed uprising in the Lika region in 1932, one Ustasha insurgent, Stipe Devčić, blew himself up with his hand grenade rather than face the ignominy of capture by Yugoslav gendarmes.³² In the late 1930s, due to the harsh conditions in the Ustasha training camps and disillusionment with the Movement itself, dissident Ustashes were allowed to return to Croatia after an agreement between the Yugoslav authorities and Italy. This did not mean that on returning to Croatia these Ustashes simply returned to their former lives. On the contrary, Ustashes such as the novelist Mile Budak or the former law student Jure Francetić took the opportunity of being back in the homeland to propagandise for an independent Croatia, especially amongst university and high school students, through front workers’ and charitable organisations.³³

The first post-war Yugoslav analyses to appear about the Ustashes were explicitly political. Since the Partisan Communist authorities had condemned the Ustasha Movement as an organisation of war criminals and had punished many of its leading figures after the war, it is not surprising that many early studies focused heavily on the cruelty and genocidal impulses of the Ustashes. Such studies also sought to emphasise the sufferings of Croats in the Independent State of Croatia, the marginality of the Ustasha ideology and its weak base of support. In post-fascist Croatia, now part of a new Yugoslavia of brotherhood and unity, any suggestion that ordinary Croats bore any guilt for the crimes of the

Ustashas was to be avoided since to suggest otherwise would have made the consolidation of a Yugoslav state almost impossible. According to the report of the Croat State Commission for the Investigation of the Crimes of the Occupiers and their Helpers in Jasenovac, the Ustashas knew that they could only win power by terroristic means and therefore instigated “the arrest and mass murder of Serbs, Jews and progressive Croats.” As a movement responsible for the extermination of the Serb peoples of Bosnia and Croatia, they were not just war criminals but “sadists” and “maniacs” who had nothing in common with the Croatian nation.³⁴ Nikola Nikolić’s *Jasenovački logor smrti* (Jasenovac Death Camp, 1946) and Milko Riffer’s *Grad mrtvih: Jasenovac 1943* (The City of the Dead: Jasenovac 1943, 1946), both works written by death camp survivors, also emphasised the sadism of Ustasha guards at the Jasenovac concentration camp, especially Catholic theological students, at a time in which the Croatian Catholic Church itself was itself under immense political pressure by the Communist authorities. They also tended to stress the huge numbers of victims of the Ustashas. Riffer called Jasenovac the largest underground city in Croatia, claiming that 800,000 murdered were buried in its grounds. By contrast, Viktor Novak’s *Magnum Crimen* (Major Crimes, 1948) claimed that the Catholic Church in Croatia had not only collaborated with the Ustashas, but had provided them with their genocidal ideology. In these early years when memories were still raw, Pavelić, the Ustasha leader, was understandably a hate figure. In Šime Balen’s *Pavelić* (1951), the author described him and his wife, Mara as “perverted sadists who could not live without blood, terror and horror.” His analysis of the crimes of the Ustashas against the minority Serb population in Croatia was especially coruscating. It had “no example in history, except perhaps that of Attila the Hun, Genghis Khan or Abdul Hamid.”³⁵ The memoirs of some survivors of Ustasha death camps also emphasised that as well as ethnic enemies of the Ustashas - Serbs, Jews and gypsies - Muslims and Croats had also been persecuted and exterminated. In stressing the solidarity of the inmates, not only could the Ustashas be portrayed as the nemesis of humanity generally but also as the

apogee of Croatdom whose best interests lay in a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional Yugoslav state.³⁶

Another early theme centred on the Ustashas' ideological and logistical reliance on foreign revisionist powers. Like those early works which had stressed the sadism of the Ustashas, these studies also served to separate the majority of Croats from the Ustashas by portraying the Independent State of Croatia as a puppet state under foreign occupation. These studies often drew attention to other collaborationist regimes in wartime Yugoslavia. In Ferdo Čulinović's *Okupatorska podjela Jugoslavije* (The Occupiers' Partition of Yugoslavia, 1970), other reactionary forces such as the Nedić regime in Serbia, the Chetniks and the Rozman regime in Slovenia were all portrayed as possessing the same essential political and moral character, and collaborating together against the Partisans.³⁷ Čulinović's study, like many such studies in post-war Yugoslavia, was hampered not just by ideological conformity but also by the vogue of Marxist historicism which stressed empirical details and experience. This form of historical narrative, which has been described as documentary history or Positivism, might have been an attempt to write history as it really was, but it also resulted in fact dominating at the expense of analysis, which made for very dense and sometimes unreadable studies. Bogdan Krizman's otherwise admirable learned studies of the rise and fall of the Independent State of Croatia, the Ustashas' connections with Italy and Germany and the way in which this influenced their core ideology are excellent examples of this historiographical paradigm. In his many massive studies like *Ante Pavelić i Ustaše* (Ante Pavelić and the Ustashas, 1978), *Pavelić između Hitlera i Mussolinija* (Pavelić between Hitler and Mussolini, 1980) and *Ustaše i treći reich* (The Ustashas and the Third Reich, 1983), the level of detail was, on occasion, overwhelming. This served to obscure the real value of Krizman's studies – their objectivity and nuance, made all the more admirable in the case of the author because he came from a Yugoslavist Croatian family which was persecuted by the Ustashas.³⁸

The first Yugoslavian attempt to produce a complete history of the Ustasha movement and the Independent State of Croatia was Mladen Colić's *Takozvana*

Nezavisna Država Hrvatska (The So-Called Independent State of Croatia, 1973). Its central arguments concerning the marginality of the Ustasha ideology scarcely differed from earlier accounts, yet the narrative was astonishing at the time for its absence of polemics and its calm, lucid recitation of the cause and course of the Independent State of Croatia. This followed Milan Basta's *Agonije i slom Nezavisne Države Hrvatske* (The Agony and Collapse of the Independent State of Croatia, 1971), concerning the last months of the Independent State of Croatia, was told from the point of view of a retired Partisan General. Like many observers of the Ustashas, Basta had a low opinion of the Ustashas. For him, the archetypal Ustasha was an ambitious loner or high-school dropout who could easily be manipulated by more educated activists. The Ustashas were "déclassé and deformed people for whom an Ustasha uniform and beliefs gave power over people and their property and around whom was created an aura of greatness."³⁹

The psychologically-troubled and repressed nature of Ustashas was explored in a number of Yugoslav novels too. In Branko Ćopić's, *Prolom* (The Break, 1966), one of the main protagonists, Škuro, joins the Ustasha movement precisely because he feels an outsider. Described as a "pimpily and pasty" student "undernourished and even more badly dressed, frail-looking and ignored by girls," he moves easily from the high school of the Archbishop of Sarajevo, Ivan Šarić, to the Ustashas, seeking solace from his "childhood misery and crushed dreams" in his hatred of Serbs.⁴⁰ In Ranko Petković's *Crna legija* (The Black Legion, 1963), the anti-hero, Ivo Bukić, an Ustasha emigrant, measures his iron will and discipline in terms of his ability to resist his sexual impulses, channelling his energy into his political activism.⁴¹ In cinema, this stereotype of the Ustashas did not differ. Whether in Lordan Zafranović's *Okupacija u 26 slika* (An Occupation in 26 Pictures, 1978), Frane Stiglic's *Deveti krug* (The Tenth Circle, 1967) or Dušan Vukotić's *Akcija stadion* (Action Station, 1977), the Ustashas were uniformly repulsive, stupid and vicious and their victims heroic, noble and beautiful.⁴²

In Communist Yugoslavia, the most common interpretation of the Ustasha relationship towards ideology and mass culture could be summed up by the

words of an Ustasha guard in a Slobodan Šnajder play who exclaimed to one of his prisoners, a renowned actor: “To tell you the truth, culture has always gone over my head!”⁴³ The Ustashas, historians argued, were destroyers, not creators. Artists and writers who *had* supported the Ustashas during the existence of the Independent State of Croatia had either been punished, emigrated or had assimilated themselves into the new Yugoslav cultural milieu so adroitly that neither they nor the regime wished to be reminded of their murky past. In this regard, Fikreta Jelić-Butić’s study, *Ustaše i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* (The Ustashas and the Independent State of Croatia, 1977) should be considered as a pioneering study. Its discourse did not differ from previous Yugoslav studies, yet for the first time a chapter was devoted specifically to the Ustashas’ attempt to appropriate Croatian culture for their own uses. Admittedly, Jelić-Butić arrived at fairly predictable conclusions—that the Ustasha attempt to appropriate popular cultural was a failure, that most artists of renown refused to support the regime and that those that did were little-talented writers of a clericalist or nationalist orientation. However, in stressing the importance that the Ustashas placed on culture, both as a part of their ideology and as a propaganda weapon, she opened the door to other examinations on this theme.⁴⁴

After the war, Ustasha functionaries also wrote about their experiences between 1941 and 1945. The reminiscences by Ivo Rojnica, Vjekoslav Vrančić and Matija Kovačić were potentially very interesting. Yet although all three books offered some important insights into the organisation of the Movement in the 1930s, the period of Ustasha rule was dealt with very unsatisfactorily and their memoirs amounted to little more than exercises in denial and self-justification.⁴⁵ Rather more promising was Stanko Lašić’s study, *Miroslav Krleža i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* (Miroslav Krleža and the Independent State of Croatia, 1989), an examination of artistic collaboration and resistance in the Ustasha state. It was perhaps the first study to acknowledge that the ideology of the Ustashas had its roots in a form of Croat nationalism that was not marginal or unrepresentative, but uncomfortably mainstream. At a time when Croatian separatism was once again in the ascendancy, he pointed out the dangers of unbridled nationalism,

arguing that in order to lay the brutal Ustasha past to rest, Croats would have to confront it with honesty. Until Croats asked themselves what national traditions had created the Ustashes and what in the national culture they had been able to draw on as sources of legitimacy, they would not be able to exorcise their legacy. He wrote:

I do not say, "I am not Pavelić." Nor do I say, "I am Pavelić." Rather, I say, "I am not Pavelić, but a part of me is."...More than this, I have to accept that[...]this evil is a part of my essence and I *am* also Pavelić and Pavelić is Croatdom.⁴⁶

Historical Reassessment or Holocaust Revisionism? The Ustashes in Post-Communist Yugoslavia

Lašić's advice fell on deaf ears. In the late 1980s, as the collapse of the Yugoslav state appeared imminent and nationalism gained ground, interpretations of the Ustashes became a political tool in which nuance and scholarship disappeared. In Serbia, a cult of victimhood reigned. Historians and writers, especially at the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, started to suggest that the Ustashes were a true reflection of Croatian national thought and that the Croats were a genocidal nation sure to try and repeat the horror of the wartime State of Croatia if they ever had independence again.⁴⁷ There was also an attempt by some Serb historians and scholars to suggest that many Croatian historical figures, such as Ante Starčević and Stjepan Radić, were a part of the continuum of Ustasha thought.⁴⁸ The number of Serbian victims of the Ustashes was also exaggerated beyond reason—claims that a million Serbs had died at Jasenovac death camp alone were common—which given the enormous number of real Serbian victims was unnecessary and counter-productive too. ⁴⁹ The genocide of 1941-1945 also became a preoccupation of Serbian writers and poets. Their poems, novels and

plays about these years carried a deeply depressing message: the legacy of the Ustashas was not resolved, the Partisans had not reunited the Yugoslav nations in brotherhood and unity and the national communities were as divided by historical experience as ever.⁵⁰

In Croatia, however, a far more malign phenomenon was developing which involved an attempt to rewrite the history of Ustasha rule in Croatia between 1941 and 1945 and, ultimately, challenge not only the extent of their genocide, but to deny that it had occurred at all. A campaign which was initially spearheaded by nationalist activists during the Croatian Spring (the Croatian nationalist mass movement) of the later 1960s and early 1970s would, by the 1990s, be embraced by a broad spectrum of prominent politicians and intellectuals, many of whom now served the Croatian nation as they had earlier served the Communist Party. Like some Serb historians, Croatian nationalists were fixated with the numbers of victims of the Ustashas; they argued that the Partisans had exaggerated the numbers of casualties for the purposes of political propaganda. As with many nationalist arguments, there was some truth in this. In 1948, the Yugoslav regime had produced inflated figures of their war dead – 1.7 million victims – for the Allied Reparations Committee in Paris in order to gain the maximum amount of war reparations from Germany. However, in 1964 a new survey was conducted in secret which revealed fewer than 600,000 victims, although its findings were never made public. In 1969, at the start of the Croatian Spring, Bruno Bušić, a young assistant to Professor Franjo Tudjman at the Institute of Labour History in Zagreb, wrote an article based on the 1964 census about the number of wartime victims in Croatia. In his article he claimed that not only had fewer than 60,000 people died between 1941 and 1945 in Ustasha camps, but that most of them had been Croats.⁵¹ These claims were incredibly controversial. Not only did they challenge the official Yugoslav figures of 600,000 dead in Ustasha camps, but also suggested that the Ustashas were not guilty of genocide. Bušić was a nationalist and his findings were attacked on this basis. Yet, they were also fundamentally flawed since they did not include Serbs killed outside Ustasha concentration camps (where most victims of the Ustashas met their deaths) and

nor did they include Bosnia, which was part of the Independent State of Croatia during World War Two. Between 1961 and 1964, Partisan veterans in Gradina, Bosnia found the mass graves of an estimated 400,000 victims of the Ustashas, casting serious doubts on his claims. Ultimately, Bušić was gaoled as was his mentor, Tudjman, after the crushing of the Croatian Spring in 1971, for making the findings of the 1964 census public in the first place. Tudjman was arrested and imprisoned for a second time in 1981 for claiming that the Ustasha genocide was a “black legend” used for the purposes of demonising Croatia’s aspirations for independence. In the same year, the discoveries of Bosnian veterans were made public in a Serbian journal and Tudjman was accused of trying to hide the truth “like the Ustashas.”⁵² Such criticism was justified since it was a small step from minimising the crimes of the Ustashas to rehabilitating them as Croatian freedom fighters. With the election in 1990 of Tudjman’s ultra-nationalistic Croatian Democratic Community and Tudjman as President of the first independent Croat state since 1945, this is precisely what happened.

The attempt to re-examine how many citizens had fallen victim to the Ustashas, could have been an intellectually-valid exercise. However, it quickly degenerated into a campaign of historical revisionism in which the Ustashas were re-interpreted as flawed liberation fighters and the genocide committed by the Ustashas as a myth.⁵³ In an atmosphere in which veteran Ustashas were invited back to sit in the newly-independent state Sabor and in which streets and buildings were named in honour of convicted Ustasha war criminals such as Mile Budak, even respected Croatian academics and scholarly journals were unable to resist the nationalist rhetoric and they became obsessed by trying to prove that the Partisans had exaggerated the extent of Ustasha crimes.⁵⁴ Prestigious Croatian academics from the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences also revived many of the racial theories which the Ustashas had adhered to, such as the Vlachian theory of Serbian origins and the belief that Serbs in Croatia were really Orthodox Croats.⁵⁵ Thus, the new Croatian historiography with its relativising tendencies, its stated desire for objectivity and “balance” in the study of the Holocaust in Croatia as well as its redefinition of the Ustashas as anti-communist

martyrs came close to replicating in both form and content the process of Holocaust revisionism prevalent in the West in recent decades.⁵⁶ Nor were Croatian academics the only ones guilty of Holocaust minimisation. Western apologists of the new nationalist regime in Croatia also produced books and monographs which had two main aims: on the one hand, they sought to minimise Ustasha crimes during World War Two and present the Ustashas as an aberration in Croatian history and, on the other hand, to emphasise the crimes of Serbian nationalists - even going as far as to suggest that the Serbian national idea throughout history had been intrinsically fascist.⁵⁷ The most notorious example of this new history, Philip J. Cohen's *Serbia's Secret War: Propaganda and the Deceit of History* (1996), argued that Serbians were predisposed to genocide.⁵⁸ While some Holocaust scholars understandably condemned the bias and politicised nature of this study, other historians, sympathetic to the Croatian nationalist cause, lavished it with praise.⁵⁹

Ironically, the line of argument begun in the 1970s by nationalists such as Bušić and Tudjman can be seen as having opened the way to a more considered analysis of the Ustashas. In addition to disputing the Ustasha massacre of Serbs between 1941 and 1945, Bušić was also among the first writers to consider the revolutionary nature and populist roots of the Ustasha ideology; in other words, to move away from the idea that the Ustashas were nothing other than the puppets of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. He believed that on the basis of their military strength at the very least, as well as the fact that they remained in control of the major cities and towns in Croatia and Bosnia until the collapse of their State in May 1945, they enjoyed more support than was previously assumed. For him, Croatia was a legitimate and functioning state under the Ustashas.⁶⁰ In recent years, as national passions have died down and with it the controversy about the numbers killed in Croatia, historians in Croatia have begun to consider a wider range of aspects of the regime, including its use of mass culture as propaganda. One of the best recent examples of this is a study of the Ustasha cultural journal, *Spremnost* (1998), by Trpimir Mačan. The aim of his book was to explain how the Ustashas "wrote about themselves, their state and the things

that happened in it.” One of the most important things we learn from this book is that the Ustasha movement was not monolithic once in power and that the politics of the journal changed, in a mirror image of the regime, as conditions in the state itself changed: from militant to moderate and back again. Even in a totalitarian state there was a level of cultural and political plurality.⁶¹ Recent monographs and studies of specific localities in the Independent State of Croatia have also shown that social life developed under the Ustashas, suggesting that not everywhere in Croatia was in insurrection against their rule and that society remained normal in some parts of the State against received Communist-era scholarship.⁶² Studies of the cultural politics of the Ustashas have also shown the way in which the regime opened a window of opportunity to a new generation of artists. In the past decade, there have been considerations of the function of literary prizes in Croatia under the Ustashas which have shown the complexity of the relationship between the Ustashas and Croatian artists. This has led one Croat historian to claim that not only was cultural freedom greater under the Ustashas than their Communist successors but that the “free spirit” of artists was “enabled and even encouraged by the high level of freedom which existed in the sphere of culture and literature in the Independent State of Croatia.”⁶³

Other studies have sought to reassess the works of artists who supported the Ustashas. In *Društvo žrtovanih hrvatskih pjesnika* (The Society of the Martyred Croatian Poet, 1998), Banimir Donat has re-examined the literature and politics of poets such as Branko Klarić and Zlatko Milković, comparing them to French literary figures such as Robert Brasillach and Pierre Drieu La Rochelle with their rightist politics and aesthetic values.⁶⁴ Zdenka Turcinec has examined the politics of censorship in the Ustasha state, showing the chaotic nature of what passed for government control, the decisions which were taken and the arbitrary thinking behind them. She has also shown the way in which censorship responded to populist demands and the extent to which censorship developed independently of the hierarchy of the State. Her article, by detailing the large numbers of decisions which did not please the German occupation authorities, questions the extent to which the State can be seen as a puppet state of the Nazis.⁶⁵ Some studies have

examined the link between cultural politics and ethnic persecution. Marko Samardžija's books of the Ustashas' campaign to transform the Croatian language by cleansing it of all Serbian and foreign words, *Hrvatski jezik u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj* (The Croatian Language in the Independent State of Croatia, 1992) and *Ježicni purizam u Nezavisne Države Hrvatske* (Linguistic Purification in the Independent State of Croatia, 1993) demonstrate how the rhetoric of purification reflected a mentality in which the eradication of all Serbian and foreign cultural influence was seen as essential for the survival of the Croatian nation. Utopian cultural projects like these which aimed at remaking the Croat nation ran simultaneously with the campaign of ethnic extermination and Samardžija shows how popular culture was used to create an intellectual climate in which genocide could be portrayed to the masses as permissible and even laudable.⁶⁶

Despite the popular interest in Nazism and fascism, relatively few studies have been produced outside Yugoslavia and even fewer in the English language concerning the Ustashas. The first systematic account of the Ustasha Movement outside Yugoslavia was Martin Broszat and Ladislaus Hory's pioneering *Der kroatische Ustascha Staat, 1941-1945* (The Croatian Ustasha State, 1965) which traced the Ustasha Movement from its origins amongst nationalist student clubs at the University of Zagreb in the 1920s to its defeat in 1945. It covered an impressive range of aspects of the Movement and its State – from its racial policy to its foreign policy and its relationship with Germany and Italy. Like many books on the Ustashas, it argued that their State was maintained largely due to the Axis occupation system in the Balkans, labelling it a “hated system.”⁶⁷ The weakness of the book lay in the fact that it relied on secondary sources, especially German diplomatic sources for its evidence. At around the same time, a French writer, Edmond Paris wrote a visceral study of the terror of the Ustashas against Jews and Serbs between 1941 and 1945. Entitled *Genocide in Satellite Croatia, 1941-1945* (1961), although recording in graphic detail the horror of life under the Ustashas, it not only emphasised the role Catholic clergy had played in the Holocaust in Croatia, but also contained a pronounced anti-Catholic slant.

Likewise, the American translation of Vladimir Dedijer's *The Yugoslav Auschwitz and the Vatican: The Croatian Massacre of the Serbs During World War II* (1992) was another potentially interesting study let down by a perceived anti-Catholic bias. By contrast, Lazar M. Kostich's *Holocaust in the Independent State of Croatia* (1981) combined lurid details of Ustasha atrocities with a very definite anti-Croatian as well as anti-Catholic thesis.⁶⁸ One of the most recent serious studies of the Ustasha Movement in English is Srdja Trifković's *Ustaša: Croatian Separatism and European Politics, 1929-1945* (1997) which argues that the Ustashas were a political phenomenon symptomatic of the nature of extreme Croat nationalism, "small, insecure, undeveloped linguistically and ideologically." Save for its aim of an independent state and its visceral hatred of Serbs and Jews, Trifković continues, it had no original ideas about how the society in the new Croatian state would be formed.⁶⁹ These arguments were not essentially different from those outlined in Aleksa Djilas's study of the inter-war Communist Party of Yugoslavia, *The Contested Country* (1991). He argued that the anti-Serb ideology of the Ustashas was rooted in traditional Croatian nationalism and believed that the violence of the Movement could be attributed to the social background and geographical location of Croat nationalists in the rocky Dinaric region.⁷⁰ To these two studies should probably be added Richard West's extensive chapters on the Ustashas and the Independent State of Croatia in his well-written *Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia* (1994). Published in the midst of the recent civil war in Yugoslavia, it focused on the persecution of Serbs and the conduct of the Catholic Church.⁷¹ Jozo Tomasevich's *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration* (2001), epic in scope and extraordinarily rich in detail though it was, did not necessarily reveal anything new or explore different scholarly avenues. Its basic thesis – that the Ustashas were unpopular and unrepresentative – would have seemed familiar to anyone who had read the works of post-war Yugoslav scholars.⁷²

Some of the best work on the Ustashas in the English language is to be found in general studies of fascism and articles. Studies have explored the conduct of the Catholic Church in Croatia and the role religious imagery played in the Ustasha

ideology and the genocide of Serbs, Jews, and gypsies; others have explored the fate of different nationalities and minorities in the Independent State of Croatia or the short life of the Croatian State Sabor in 1942; others still have examined social relationships and private lives in the Ustasha state, examining the experience of women or youth in the State.⁷³ Such studies, short as most of them are, have increased our understanding of the Ustasha far more, in some cases, than many much longer books have. However, until now there has been no complete study of the Ustasha Movement and the Independent State of Croatia in the English language and certainly none which has sought, like Mosse, to view the movement from the inside out. In fact, perhaps the only comprehensive study of the Ustashes to step outside the familiar interpretative frameworks is James J. Sadkovich's *Italian Support for Croatian Terrorism* (1987). In many respects a fine study of the origins and ideology of the Movement, emphasising the role both domestic support and exile in Italy played in its ideological outlook, and arguing persuasively that the Ustashes were part of a broad-based national movement for independence, this innovative study's balanced examination of the Ustasha Movement did not extend to its consideration of Yugoslav politics. The major weakness of the book was to be found in its author's demonisation of Serbian political parties as hegemonistic and malign as well as his exaggeration of the oppressive nature of the Yugoslav state in the inter-war period.⁷⁴ That this study – the best single study of the Ustasha Movement in the English language – did not explore the years of Ustasha rule in Croatia only serves to illustrate the still-taboo nature of the harrowing events in Croatia between 1941 and 1945 in both Croatian and Western historiography.

Culture as Power: The Aesthetics of Yugoslavism

In order to better comprehend the Ustashes' understanding of culture, ideology and the nation, it is necessary to consider the way in which the Kingdom of

Yugoslavia, formed in 1918, used popular culture to try to build a new sense of national belonging and consciousness. Not only did the national policies of Yugoslavia give rise to the creation of the Ustasha Movement, but as men for the most part socialised and educated in Yugoslavia, many of their notions about mass culture and ideology were inspired by Yugoslavism. For example, the Ustasha poetry epics, with their tales of suffering and sacrifice, crucifixion and resurrection were a replication of the monumental Kosovo cycle; the Ustashes were also influenced by the Yugoslav Dadists, Zenithists and surrealists. Their racial theories drew on similar racial and eugenicist theories as Yugoslav ideologues. As Hapsburg and Ottoman rule had helped to make Yugoslavism, so Yugoslavism helped to make the Ustashes.

Before Yugoslavia was a political reality, Yugoslavism had been a cultural movement. The concept of Yugoslavism was first articulated in the Illyrian movement of Ljudevit Gaj in the mid-nineteenth century, predicated on the cultural and linguistic similarities of the peoples of the South Slav lands. Gaj had compared the people of the South Slav region to strings on a lyre and pleaded for them to “stop each strumming on his own string and tune the lyre to a single harmony.”⁷⁵ While some Yugoslav ideologues believed that autonomous national cultures could be used to create a unified nation and others believed that the culture of the most populous nation, the Serbs, should be the template for a new Yugoslav culture, many others believed in the creation of a new Yugoslav culture through the fusing of Slovene, Croatian and Serbian national cultures. Through the creation of a new synthetic culture, a sense of unity and oneness would be fostered and hence a Yugoslav nation made. Although many ideologues believed that culture could be used to turn Croats, Serbs and Slovenes into Yugoslavs, they often complained that political leaders were “completely deaf to culture” wanting to achieve “freedom without unity.”⁷⁶ Yugoslav ideologues also possessed a universalist outlook and proclaimed that the values of South Slav unity were the values of humanity. Qualities associated with Yugoslavism included a love of democracy, racial and religious tolerance and liberal, progressive ideals, including sex education in schools, the liberalisation of marriage laws and equality between

men and women.⁷⁷ Yet Yugoslavism was no amoral creed: on the contrary, it heralded a new healthy morality and promised the banishment of “speculators, profiteers and parasites.”⁷⁸

In as far as Yugoslavism was a cultural idea, the main conflict in the new state was between those who favoured a synthetic Yugoslav identity and those who did not.⁷⁹ The most celebrated vision of South Slav unity was expressed in the sculptures of Ivan Meštrović. His and other artists’ romantic vision of a Yugoslav nation constructed from a synthesis of the three national groups was embodied in sculptures such as “Miloš Obilić” (1909) and “Kosovo Temple” (1913). This romantic Yugoslavism was also eloquently expressed in the founding myths of the state which included the Battle of Kosovo, Young Bosnia, the Yugoslav volunteers, and epics such as the *Mountain Wreath*. In the synthetic vision, Croat national heroes such as Petar Zrinski, Krsto Frankopan and King Tomislav were appropriated as early Yugoslav ideologues as much as the Serbian heroes Tsar Lazar, Marko Kraljević and Petar Njegoš.⁸⁰

The utopian roots of Yugoslav unitarism help to explain its appeal both to later Ustashas and Communists. The writer, August Cesarec, for one, declared that the creation of the Yugoslav state was a “national revolution” and the “white future.”⁸¹ Like romantic Yugoslavs, he argued that unitarism could create a unified nation free from the tribal antagonism of the past. However, despite sharing with romantic Yugoslav ideologues a vision of a society based on brotherhood and the withering away of national distinctions, the cultural radicalism of bourgeois politicians did not satisfy socially revolutionary Yugoslavs since they believed that in order to create a harmonious Yugoslav society, social justice, not just cultural union, was required. Increasingly, leftist Yugoslavs came to criticise both the cultural and social conservatism of official Yugoslavism.⁸² Cesarec, for example, wrote that the symbols of the new state could be found not in the person of the Mother of the Yugoviches or Marko Kraljević but “in the invalid that lies on our streets and in the bohemian that sits in cafes, in the devout pilgrim that totters before the crucifix and in the worker that starves and in the bureaucrat.”⁸³ Meanwhile, poets such as the surrealist Tin Ujević or the

Dadist, Dragan Aleksić, presented a chaotic and anarchic vision of Yugoslavism. Aleksić wrote in his Dadaist manifesto: "From its foundations, we destroy, we destroy, let language explode into pieces and leave behind the great Dada...culture and shameless civilisation will fall."⁸⁴ There was also aggression and nihilism. The Zenithist Manifesto (1921) of Ljubomir Mičić and Boško Tokin, lauded the "reawakened barbarism" of the Yugoslavs claiming Zenithism as "the most rebellious act of the young barbaric race."⁸⁵

If Yugoslav ideologues believed they were creating a revolutionary utopian state then they believed even more fervently that they were creating a new Yugoslav person, a synthesis of the best qualities of the various Yugoslav tribes.⁸⁶ The new Yugoslav person would be not only a new person but a person of physical power and strength, healthy, with mental will, intelligence and education.⁸⁷ To create the new Yugoslav, Yugoslav races would have to be mixed. Racial biology and eugenics, seen as progressive, were an important factor in this project. Vladimir Dvorniković, an ethnologist, who had sought to prove the existence of a Yugoslav race, proclaimed the new Yugoslav "one of the most naturally gifted peoples of Europe" leading "all other people in brain size."⁸⁸ As a synthesis of the three Yugoslav tribes, he believed they had "dynamism, rhythm, strong temperament, strong expressivity and the constructive ability of fantasy."⁸⁹ Taking the Dinaric man as an ideal, Jovan Cvijić also saw the Yugoslav as a male warrior, "violent and fiery."⁹⁰ The dynamism and aggression of the Yugoslav race rapidly became part of the official iconography of the state: sculpture and painting presented Yugoslav womanhood as athletic Amazons and Yugoslav males as a mythical Prometheus unbound. Yugoslav architecture, preoccupied with modernism and scale, strove to represent the gigantism of the Yugoslav imagination.⁹¹

Meanwhile, through culture, a nationalist consensus in Croatia was also being forged. From the start of the 1930s, a genre of social novel began to appear extolling the honest peasant way of life, expressing hostility to the landowning and capitalist bourgeoisie and promoting a blood and soil view of Croatian nationality.⁹² Highly nationalistic poetry anthologies also expressed the themes of homeland, the suffering of Croatia, calling for a return, physically and

psychologically, to Croatia.⁹³ These ideas likewise emerged in visual arts. An insurgent movement of young Croatian artists were moving away from bourgeois respectability and creating what they saw as a new Croatian art based on the cult of pastoralism and peasant life.⁹⁴ Croatian artists who had served the Yugoslav regime increasingly found themselves subject to attack, labelled mediocrities who, by making a Faustian pact, had unfairly won fortune and honours.⁹⁵ Writers were also exploring the alienation of urban existence or the corruption of public life in Yugoslavia.⁹⁶ Overall, there was a feeling of both despair and anticipation. The move to social issues was part of an artistic trend of that period. However, not only nationalist but also socialist artists in Croatia were endeavouring to give a stronger social dimension to art through social realism and utilitarianism.⁹⁷ As one literary journal predicted in 1938, a young movement of male and female writers was emerging from the cities and villages to create a new form of art which would synthesise urban modernism and pastoral traditionalism as the expression of “a new national spirit.”⁹⁸

Ideology as Power: the Ustasha State

The creation of an Independent State of Croatia was made possible by the Nazi invasion of Yugoslavia in March 1941 and its subsequent partition. On 10 April 1941, German soldiers marched into Zagreb and Slavko Kvaternik, a high-ranking Ustasha, declared an independent Croatian state. Both during and after the Second World War, Ustashes argued that their declaration of an independent state preceded the arrival of the Wehrmacht into Zagreb; theirs was an authentically national revolution. Despite this bold claim, the Independent State of Croatia, though nominally independent, was divided into two zones: an Italian and a German zone. On 18 May 1941, Pavelić went to Rome and signed the Rome Agreements which not only gave the Italians a large slice of territory in Dalmatia

but also Croatia a new king, King Tomislav II, Prince Aimone of Savoy. The annexation of parts of Dalmatia, governed by Guiseppe Bastiani, provoked outrage and rebellion amongst the population and did much to discredit the Ustasha regime amongst the masses. In addition to territorial occupation, Croatia was also obliged to pay for the upkeep of foreign soldiers on its territory and to make trade agreements with Italy and Germany which were lucrative for the occupying powers only. Croatia's foreign and economic policy was also hardly independent: the State followed the policies dictated by the Axis. In short, the fate of the Independent State of Croatia was inextricably linked to the fortunes of Italy and Germany.

The Ustashes' national policies caused serious rifts between them and their allies. Both Italian and German military commanders rapidly became appalled at their genocidal conduct towards Serbs and, in the case of the Italians, Jews as well. German and Italian high command in Croatia realised that the Ustashes' campaign of terror was provoking massive rebellions in the State and increasing support for resistance movements. Yet for Edmund Glaise von Horsteneau, the military plenipotentiary in Zagreb, or the Italian governor Bastiani, as for ordinary German and Italian soldiers, humanity also played a role. Horsteneau, for example, referred to the Ustashes disparagingly as "these bands of murderers and killers."⁹⁹ Very soon Italian and German commanders were intervening to save Serbs from Ustasha depredations and even supporting Serb armed units, such as the Chetniks. As early as June 1941, Serbian and Jewish refugees were pouring into Split and by July Serbs from the Lika had sent a letter to the high command of the Sassari Division asking them to occupy the whole of the province as their friends and protectors.¹⁰⁰ Rapidly, as the Ustashes themselves complained, Italian soldiers and officials became active enemies of the Movement and on occasions executed Ustasha activists because of atrocities they had committed or for not obeying Italian edicts. For their part the Germans tolerated the Ustashes only because they were such reliable and loyal allies whilst viewing with contempt their persecution of the Serbs and with amused disdain their military abilities. This did not mean that the new state did not have popular

support. In his memoirs, Vladko Maček, then leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, recalled that “a wave of enthusiasm pervaded Zagreb at this time, not unlike that which had swept through the town in 1918 when links with Hungary were severed.”¹⁰¹ In a prize-winning essay published in 1942, Aleksandar Žibrat wrote that with the proclamation of an independent Croatia “fear and worry had disappeared. Croatia had become free and happy. Our house, which through many years had been a place of silent family tragedy, experienced, on that day, one could say, a heavenly joy.”¹⁰² Even Communists in Croatia welcomed the creation of an independent Croatian state and newspaper reports of the time evoked a mood of genuine elation amongst ordinary Croats.¹⁰³

What sort of state were the masses cheering? The structure of the Independent State of Croatia was both centralised and organic. The Poglavnik (the supreme Ustasha leader), Pavelić, enjoyed ultimate control over all decisions in the state. Beyond him the real seat of power was the Main Ustasha Headquarters composed of seven deputy chiefs of staff, five Corps of Adjutants and twenty-three Commissars. On 16 April 1941, Pavelić appointed his first Ustasha government in which he took the position of both Prime Minister and foreign minister. Others in his eleven man strong cabinet included Slavko Kvaternik, Andrija Artuković and Osman Kulenović (see Appendix A). Ustasha authority in the state was divided up into three branches. The first branch, civilian, organised Ustashes in the state. Adult males were organised in the Male Ustashes, females in the Female Ustashes and youths up to the age of twenty-one in the Ustasha Youth. A central syndicate, the Main Alliance of Corporations, led by Aleksandar Seitz, systematised the relationship between workers and the state. A corporate state was erected, based on the theory of Croatian socialism, although it was never properly developed and its major theorists frequently disagreed over its nature. The second branch of the State was the military which comprised the Ustasha army, the Poglavnik's personal bodyguard, various élite paramilitary units such as the Black Legion of Colonel Jure Francetić and the Home Guard commanded by Colonel Slavko Kvaternik. The third branch of the Ustasha state, the security service, was overseen by the Ustasha Supervisory Service and a parallel institution, the

Commissariat of Security, both headed by Eugen Dido Kvaternik. It contained four main bureaus: one for minorities, another for political enemies, a secret police force and an office for overseeing concentration camps.¹⁰⁴ The Ustashas also established a series of emergency people's courts which implemented arbitrary justice, including the death penalty. In addition to the new people's courts, the propaganda and censorship departments founded by the Ustashas in 1941 could also impose the death penalty. The State Bureau for Propaganda (later Chief Commissariat for Propaganda – Glavno ravnateljstvo za promičbu), headed by Mijo Tolj and run by a group of nationalist academics and writers decided on the censorship of books, journals and literature, often also imposing articles on newspaper editors. Yet, its system of decision making was profoundly unsystematic and frequently chaotic; despite Tolj's hardline views, some of its members were generally well-intentioned and far from dogmatic. In stark contrast, the propaganda division of the Chief Prosecutor's Office had the power to impose the death penalty for seditious political works or for works advocating a violent seizure of power or, ironically, terrorism. However, it is not clear how often these powers were enacted.

The organisation of the state mirrored the organisation of the Movement itself, which was based on a system of revolutionary cells: the largest administrative unit was the Headquarter (Stožer), followed by the Camp (Logor), the Encampment (Tabor); the most basic unit was the Cell (Roj, Zbir). In the Independent State of Croatia, this organisational unit was reproduced in the province (Župa), the district (Kotar) and the Commune or Neighbourhood (Općina). There were Ustasha Headquarters (or Stations as the Ustashas called them) at the different layers of the State so that even in the most basic unit, the commune—which could be as small as an apartment or as big as a village—there was an Ustasha presence and citizens were constantly under their gaze. There were also a large number of civilian informers. The division of the State into large provinces gave provincial governors extensive powers outside central control and some such as Victor Gutić in eastern Bosnia were a law unto themselves and went as far as to flagrantly disobey commands from Zagreb.¹⁰⁵ In a reflection of the

general wave of enthusiasm which initially swept the State, the Ustasha Movement was deluged by an influx of new members, and by the end of 1941, the Movement had more than 100,000 new registered members. In August 1941 the most nationalist elements of the Croatian Peasant Party, led by Janko Tortić and Lovro Šušić, also formally joined the Ustasha government, an event which did not please radical émigré Ustashas who feared that the entry of non-Ustashas into the movement would weaken its ideological purity. The widow, daughter and son of Stjepan Radić also gave their unqualified support to the Ustashas and fired off furious broadsides against those members of the Peasant Party who refused to support the Ustashas.¹⁰⁶ Throughout the summer of 1941, local branches of the Peasant Party and workers' unions also pledged their loyalty to the Movement.¹⁰⁷ Sometimes allied and sometimes antagonistic to the Ustashas was the Croatian Nazi Party led by Slavko Govedić which, though small, was popular with the radical nationalist youths who wrote for Stjepan Buć's newspaper, *Nezavisnost*, as well as with some workers.¹⁰⁸

The façade of a sovereign state in which the opinion of the masses would be respected was also aided by the creation of a Croat parliament, with its mystical connection to Croat medieval state independence.¹⁰⁹ However, the Independent State of Croatia was not simply totalitarian. At times when the regime displeased its citizens (for example, when Dalmatia was ceded to Italian control), citizens were unafraid about protesting. Therefore, the Ustashas' system of governance can be most accurately described as a system of collaborative terror—that is, as a totalitarian system which nonetheless left a private sphere to the citizen and relied on the passive acceptance, if not support, of a large section of the population in order to accomplish its ambitions. This poses the question: if it was not fear which prevented ordinary people from resisting more actively the policies of the Ustashas, then something else must have been the reason for this passivity. The Croatian masses had continued to support the Peasant Party even as it turned to extreme nationalism; by the late 1930s, support for the Ustashas was growing throughout Croatian society. Although there were various factors which contributed to the partial success of the Ustashas—poverty, the repressive nature

of Yugoslavia, economic stasis—something else led to the acceptance of and acquiescence with Ustasha rule amongst sections of the masses and intelligentsia: that something else was the Ustashes' appropriation and use of popular culture.

NOTES

- ¹ *Razpored proslave: postrojbi ustaškog pokreta prigodom treće godišnjice Nezavisne Države Hrvatske* (Zagreb: n.p. 10 April 1944), 3-5.
- ² Bzik (1942 c), 18.
- ³ See, for example, Jelić-Butić (1977), Colić (1973), Krizman (1978).
- ⁴ *Ustaša*, December 1940.
- ⁵ *Prosujetni život*, 1-2: 1942, 5, *Hrvatska smotra*, 12: 1941, 623-4 cited in Jelić-Butić (1977), 24.
- ⁶ Mann (1992), 176, 347.
- ⁷ Johst (1934), 26.
- ⁸ Smith (1987), 133, Gellner (1983), 37.
- ⁹ Fox (1990), 1-14, Wright (1998), 8-15.
- ¹⁰ Mekanec (1944), 18-23.
- ¹¹ For example, the Ustasha functionary from Dubrovnik, Edo Bulat, was a former Orjuna activist; the former Ustasha Šime Balen became a leading Communist. See Avakumović (1964), 93-122.
- ¹² See, for example, Lukas (1944), 5-11.
- ¹³ Thomson (1977), Ellul (1962), 304-18.
- ¹⁴ See, for example, Jelić-Butić, n. 48, 24, Popović (1989).
- ¹⁵ Regarding the Ustasha émigré circles in Germany and Italy, see, for example Biber (1964), 37-54, Sadkovich (1987).
- ¹⁶ Ustaše-Starčevići (1937), 13-14.
- ¹⁷ A detailed study of fascism is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the literature is now enormous. A useful recent discussion of the origins and ideology of fascism can be found in Griffin (2002), 21-44.
- ¹⁸ Sternhell (1994), 3-4, 27, 238, 252. By contrast, Renzo De Felice saw fascism as a response to the inter-war crisis of the lower middle-classes but with revolutionary aims and visions nonetheless. Felice (1977), 174-192.
- ¹⁹ See, for example, Mosse (1980), Mosse (1996), 244-52, Sternhell (1994), Morrison (1996), Jameson (1971), Adamson (1993).
- ²⁰ Benjamin (1961), 148-76.
- ²¹ Mosse (1999), ix-xviii.
- ²² Roh (1958), 153.
- ²³ See, for example, Petropoulos (1996), 3-16, Adam (1992), 303.
- ²⁴ Golomstock (1990), ix-xv.
- ²⁵ See, for example, Griffin (1996), 1-25, Lady, (1986), Schnapp, (1996), 235-44, Ravetto, (2001).
- ²⁶ Braun (1996), 273-88, Ben-Ghiat (1996), 293-311, Stone (1998).
- ²⁷ Berezin (1997), Fogu (2003), Ben-Ghiat (2001), Falasca-Zamponi (1997), De Grazia (1981).

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- ²⁸ Regarding the course of the negotiations and the reasons for their failure, see Matković (1962), 41-58.
- ²⁹ Banac (1984), 264-65.
- ³⁰ According to the sensational memoirs of Jelka Pogorelec, ex-fiancée of Gustav Perčec. Pogorelec (1933), 25-30.
- ³¹ Regarding the social make-up of the membership of the émigré Ustasha organisation, see Krizman (1980), 564-73.
- ³² Regarding the Lika uprising, see Stojkov (1970), 167-80, *Ustaša*, September 1932.
- ³³ Jelić-Butić (1978), 46-48, Krizman (1978), 310-15, Colić (1974), 62.
- ³⁴ Zemaljska komisija Hrvatske za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača (1946), 3-6.
- ³⁵ Nikolić (1946), Novak (1948), Balen (1951), 6, Riffer (1946).
- ³⁶ Peršen (1966), 329.
- ³⁷ Čulinović (1970), 78, Krizman (1978), (1983-6) Biber (1964), 37-54.
- ³⁸ Krizman (1978), Krizman (1980), Krizman, 1-2 (1983) and Krizman, 1-3 (1983-86).
- ³⁹ Colić (1973), Basta (1971), 381.
- ⁴⁰ Čopić (1966), 62.
- ⁴¹ Petković (1963), 47.
- ⁴² Škrabalo (1984), 97-108.
- ⁴³ Šnajder (1982), 115.
- ⁴⁴ Jelić-Butić (1977), 203-14.
- ⁴⁵ Rojnica (1969), Vrančić (1985), Kovačić (1980).
- ⁴⁶ Lašić (1989), 1-15 [my emphasis].
- ⁴⁷ Krestić (1986), 1-5, Klajkić (1991).
- ⁴⁸ A good example is Krestić (1998) in which he links Starčević, Kvaternik, Frank and Pavelić as sharing the same Croatian nationalist genocidal ideology.
- ⁴⁹ Bulajić (1994), Dedijer (1986).
- ⁵⁰ See, for example, Selenić (1990), Lubarda (1982), Drašković (1987), Radulović (1990), Raičković (1991), 21-2.
- ⁵¹ Bušić (1969), 2-3. See also Bušić (1977), 1-17.
- ⁵² Pašić (1989), 65-84.
- ⁵³ One particularly inflammatory nationalist study of Jasenovac was entitled *The Serbian Myth about Jasenovac*. See Pečarić (1998).
- ⁵⁴ Tudjman (1989), 309-419, Žerjavić (1992), Žerjavić (1993), 65-86, Valentić (2000), 317-334, Krišto, (2001), 117-33. An excellent summary of nationalist trends in reinterpretations of the Second World War in Croatia can be found in Denich (1994), 372-82.
- ⁵⁵ See, for example, Valentić (1992), 1-23, Mužić (1991), Požar (1996).
- ⁵⁶ Lipstadt (1993).

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- ⁵⁷ Anzulović (1999), Grmek, Gjidara and Simac (1993), Čović (1991). See also Tadjman (1996), 1-128.
- ⁵⁸ Cohen (1996).
- ⁵⁹ Cf Ingrao (1997), 763-71, Simms (1996), 25 with Reinhartz (2000), 300-02.
- ⁶⁰ Bušić (1968), 10-13.
- ⁶¹ Mačan (1998),
- ⁶² Klačić (2000), 527-45.
- ⁶³ Donat (1995), 64-80, Jelić, (1995), 521-7.
- ⁶⁴ Donat (1998), Donat (2000), 117-138, Mihanović (1990), 145-051.
- ⁶⁵ Turcinec (2000), 79-90.
- ⁶⁶ Samardžija (1992), Samardžija (1993).
- ⁶⁷ Hory and Broszat (1965), 141.
- ⁶⁸ Paris (1961), Dedijer (1992), Kostich (1981).
- ⁶⁹ Trifković (1997), 273.
- ⁷⁰ Djilas (1991), 103-127.
- ⁷¹ West (1994), 77-102.
- ⁷² Tomasevich (2001).
- ⁷³ Jelinek (1980 a), 260-273, Jelinek (1980 b), 195-206, Jelinek (1980 c), 366-75, Steinberg (1994), 175-191, Mirković (1996), 75-85, Bokavoy (2003), 116-22, Alexander (1987), 31-62.
- ⁷⁴ See Sadkovich (1987).
- ⁷⁵ Despalatović (1975), Wachtel (1998), 17.
- ⁷⁶ Bartulović (1918), 353-8, Wachtel (1998), 5.
- ⁷⁷ Vošnjak (1928), 113-120, Štampar (1919), 222-3, Nikias (1919), 485-6, L. (1922), 1-3, M.A. (1919), 363-5.
- ⁷⁸ Marković (1919), 296-8.
- ⁷⁹ Wachtel (1998), 5-11.
- ⁸⁰ See, for example, Mažuranić (1925), 133-5, Črnjanski (1919), 8, Šišić (1920), 15-17.
- ⁸¹ Djilas (1991), 59.
- ⁸² Tkačić (1919), 263-4.
- ⁸³ Cesarec (1919 a, b), 71-80, 24-31.
- ⁸⁴ Aleksić (1921), 6.
- ⁸⁵ Mičić (1922), 3-5.
- ⁸⁶ Cvijić (1922), 212-8.
- ⁸⁷ Wachtel (1998), 93.
- ⁸⁸ Wachtel, (1998) 261, n. 46, Radošević (1935), 613-4.
- ⁸⁹ Wachtel (1998), 94.
- ⁹⁰ Cvijić (1930), 383.

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- ⁹¹ Examples include Trepše (1929), Planić (1929), Niehardt (1929), Mujadžić (1929), Mujadžić (1928), Postružnik (1928).
- ⁹² Bonafačić (1935), Miholjević (1937), Softa (1940), Jurčić (1932 a, c, d, e), 37-62, Jurčić (1936 c), 215.
- ⁹³ Anton Nizeteo (1936), Jurčić (1936 a, b, c), Kuhar (1936), Ivo Ladika (1936), 212-215, Kozarčanin, (1939), 184-85, Kozarčanin (1936), 352, Majer (1940), 21-2, Jurčić (1932 b), 61-2, Matijašević (1937), 185-6.
- ⁹⁴ *Novosti*, 30 November 1939.
- ⁹⁵ Jurčić (1936 d), 119-25.
- ⁹⁶ Kozarčanin (1937), Kolar (1933, 1936), Krleža (1932, 1938).
- ⁹⁷ Vučetić (1960), 88-95.
- ⁹⁸ *Almanah društva hrvatskih književnica*, 1938, 1-3.
- ⁹⁹ Broucek (1988) 165.
- ¹⁰⁰ Steinberg (1990), 15-49, Broucek (1988), 165, Stanisavljević (1962), 5-137, Žurić (1969), 195-209.
- ¹⁰¹ Maček (1957), 230.
- ¹⁰² *Deutsche Zeitung in Kroatien*, 10 April 1942.
- ¹⁰³ *Hrvatski narod*, 10 April 1941, *Hrvatski narod*, 11 April 1941, Nikšić (1985), 521..
- ¹⁰⁴ Junašević and Belić (1943), 1028-50, 483, Jelić-Butić (1977), 107-14.
- ¹⁰⁵ Junašević and Belić (1943), 1028-50.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Hrvatski narod*, 1 July 1941, *Hrvatski narod*, 1 November 1941.
- ¹⁰⁷ For example, HIS/NDH/2400-3199/3/2478/49, HIS/NDH/31/9961/1503-1995/1911/1912, HIS/NDH/31/9961/1925, MUP/NDH/1036-10296/304/223/6641. See also *Hrvatski narod*, 15 August 1941, *Hrvatski branik*, 6 September 1941, *Hrvatski branik*, 16 August 1941. See also two post-war studies on this subject by Konjević (1972), 104-112, (1971), 173-189.
- ¹⁰⁸ Krizman (1980), 330-8, Krizman (1978), 311-12.
- ¹⁰⁹ Regarding the Sabor, see Kišić-Kolanović (2000), 545-565, Jelinek, (1980 a), 260-273. A complete list of representatives to the reconvened Sabor is contained in Pekić (1942), 165-71.

National Revolution as Final Solution: Serbs, Jews and Muslims in the Ustasha State

For Eugen Dido Kvaternik, the first and most notorious commissar of the feared Ustasha Supervisory Service, ethnicity and race was integral to the Ustasha ideology. "Anti-Serbianism was the heart of the Ustasha ideology," he recalled, "its *raison d'être* and *ceterum censeo*. This was the consequence of twenty years of the rule of Belgrade in Croatia and the perception that the ruling part of Serbdom wanted to destroy the Croatian nation. Aleksandar Karadjordjević created Ante Pavelić, the Chetniks - the Ustashas. The consequences are known...Anti-Serbdom was for Pavelić a *valvula di sicurezza*, through which he channelled the militancy of Croatian youths, who would otherwise have rebelled against his Italophile politics, his Italian protectorate and against him himself."¹ Certainly, the ideology of the Ustashas addressed other concerns which were not ostensibly connected to the national question: the education of youth; the place of men and women in the new Ustasha society; the role of art and literature; the re-ordering of the economy. However, all of these concerns were, in the Ustashas' eyes, connected to the national question since they formed part of their campaign to return the nation to "Croatian" values. Thus, all the ideological and cultural initiatives of the Ustashas can be seen as subservient to and serving the national question. The Ustashas believed that in the years of Yugoslav rule, Serbs and Jews had attempted to destroy the Croatian identity. They argued that their nation was under foreign occupation from which it could only be freed by a war of liberation. In the new Croatia, a national revolution to eradicate destructive tendencies would be launched. Only in this way could the Croatian identity and

the Croatian nation be saved; without it, the Croatian nation was doomed to extinction. When critics of the Ustasha regime accuse it of having failed to create an independent state and being a satellite of the Germans and Italians, they are missing the point. The Ustashes did not conceive independence in this way. The Ustashes claimed that they were fighting a war in defence of what they saw as civilised western values against the barbarous East and the immorality and corruption which characterised it. For the Ustashes, liberation and independence were not dependent on actual independence, but rather independence from the value systems which they believed had destroyed Croatia: this meant independence from capitalism, Serb rule and the concept of Yugoslavism. Who actually helped them achieve that independence was secondary.

Starčević to Šufflay: Croatian Racial Theory Before the Ustashes

The Ustashes' ideas about the Croatian nation were governed overwhelmingly by their feelings towards the Serbs. Some historians trace the origin of the Ustashes' thinking about Serbs to the writings of Ante Starčević, the nineteenth-century father of Croatian nationalism.² Starčević and his collaborator, Eugen Kvaternik, who sought an independent Croatian state, negated the existence of Serbs in Croatia, viewing them at best as Orthodox Croats. Furthermore, Starčević often denied the existence of Serbs completely. He argued that many famous Serbian historical figures, including the Nemanjić dynasty, were, in fact, Croatian.³ At the same time, he wrote that the Muslims of Bosnia and Hercegovina were the purest of Croats, calling them the "flower of Croatianism."⁴ For extreme Croatian nationalists Starčević's most important theory was his concept of the Slavoserb. Arguing that the word "Slav" and "Serb" were names for slaves, he used this label to polemicise against anyone who did not share his political outlook. However, the term also had an ethnic meaning since it referred to the Orthodox of Croatia who refused to identify themselves as Croats and saw themselves, instead, as Serbs. Starčević labelled Slavoserbs "a trash people, the

kind of people who sell themselves to everyone, whoever and however much they want” and a race “fit for the slaughterhouse.”⁵ Although such comments have been interpreted as the intellectual origins of the Ustasas’ racial and national ideology, Starčević’s ideology was contradictory: at the same time as he attacked Serbs in Croatia, he also included them as members of the Croat nation. Moreover, at the time Starčević made such comments they were hardly untypical: Vuk Karadžić, the creator of the modern Serbian national language, had declared all those who spoke the Serbian form of Serbo-Croat Serbs, regardless of their national and cultural identity.⁶

Following Starčević’s death, in 1894 the Croatian Party of Right split into factions: the moderate faction renamed themselves the Starčević Party of Right, adopting a cautiously pro-Yugoslav agenda; by contrast, the extremist faction, led by Josip Frank, founded the Pure Party of Right which based its ideology on an implacable hatred of Serbs and interpreted Starčević’s writing on the Serbs in a purely racial manner. The followers of this party, nicknamed the Frankists, like Starčević, negated the presence of Serbs in Croatia but were no longer claiming Serb legendary figures as their own.⁷ Instead, they appealed to the prejudice and resentment of ordinary Croat at their increasingly prosperous Serb neighbours and they produced a long litany of racist insults to differentiate Croatian Serbs from themselves: “illiterate scum of gallow birds,” “lice-ridden Balkan gypsies” and “vlach pigs” were just three popular terms.⁸

The Vlach theory of Serbian origins in Croatia and especially Bosnia was a racial (and racist) theory invented by Croatian anthropologists and ethnographers at the turn of the century and subsequently enthusiastically embraced by Croatian nationalists. It emerged in an intellectual atmosphere in which eugenicist and racial biological notions were gaining prominence throughout Europe. In Bosnia, ethnographers and historians such as Ćiro Truhelka, Director of the Agronomical Museum in Sarajevo, and Vjekoslav Klaić, argued that the Serbs, who now formed the majority population in Bosnia, were not Serbs at all, but the descendants of gypsy, Romanian and Vlach nomadic shepherds brought to Bosnia by the invading Ottoman Empire as servants in the sixteenth century. Owing to the

favourably tolerant attitude of the Ottomans to the Serbian Orthodox Church, they had been converted to Orthodoxy, and thus became Serbs. Their Serb consciousness was further raised in the nineteenth century with the agitation of the Great Serbian Orthodox Patriarchy. Many nationalist ethnographers argued that not only were the Vlachs (or Morlochs and white gypsies, as they were sometimes called) a distinct racial group with alien physical characteristics, but that they were also distinguished by a number of damaging and destructive personality traits. Over time, amongst nationalists, the term “Vlach” became a synonym for a Bosnian Serb. In 1900s Bosnia, when this theory became most popular, Serbs were not only the largest ethnic group in Bosnia but they were also an increasingly assertive, coherent and politically aware community, amongst whom pan-Serb and Yugoslav ideals were evermore popular and influential. Such racial stereotyping therefore aimed to demonise the Serbs and completely dispossess them of their ethnic and cultural identity; its most extreme advocates, such as Truhelka, denied them any right to even live in Bosnia. The fact that the term “Vlach” possessed a double-meaning, connoting both a member of a specific Balkan ethnicity and also a colloquial term for a foreigner, emphasised its menacing potential.⁹

Likewise, in Croatia, the Frankists believed that the Croatian Serbs were a foreign element who wished to destroy the Croats by attempting to create a separatist state within a state which would render Croatia untenable and by acting as a tool for the dissemination of anti-Croat and pro-Yugoslav ideas. Such ideas were assiduously spread by nationalist newspapers and their propaganda was heightened at moments of inter-ethnic tension. In 1902, there was a serious anti-Serb pogrom in Zagreb, led by Frankist followers. In the first few days of September, Serb businesses were vandalised or burnt down, Serb citizens physically attacked and murdered and Serb employees arbitrarily sacked. The entire drama was played out in the pages of Croatia’s major nationalist newspapers which hurled invective at the Serb population of Croatia and encouraged its readership to do the same. It did not need much prompting: readers vowed to boycott “Vlach” shops and confiscate their property and sack

“Greek-Eastern” employees. Even this was not enough for some nationalists who demanded that the Vlach problem be remedied “in the most drastic way.”¹⁰

The targeting of Serb businesses and social clubs reflected the fact that the anger of nationalists towards the Serb population was rooted as much in social and economic conditions as national concerns. By the turn of the century, the Serb community in Croatia was becoming increasingly affluent, urbanised and confident. As well as educational and cultural institutions, it had its own banks, business associations, mutual societies, publishing houses and journals. Its separate churches, religious ceremonies and traditions distinguished Serbs from their Catholic Croatian brethren and were viewed with suspicion and downright hostility by nationalists.¹¹ In August 1902, a brochure produced by a Habsburg agent, Djordje Nastić, alleged that Belgrade was paying secret agents to launch a campaign of bombing against Croatia. While nationalist newspapers were circumspect about Nastić’s reliability, they accepted his claims uncritically and recounted lurid stories concerning plots to bomb Croatia into darkness with nitro-glycerine and dynamite. They called for Serb Orthodox priests to be arrested and for soldiers to be stationed at Serb schools to prevent Orthodox priests and teachers spreading what they saw as anti-Croat propaganda. They also demanded the creation of a Croat Orthodox Church and the arrest of Serb politicians, especially those connected with the Serbo-Croat Coalition.¹² Shortly afterwards, fifty-three prominent Serb politicians from the Independent Serbian Party were arrested on the charge that they were planning a revolution in Croatia. Support for what became known as the Great Traitors’ Trial depended to a large extent on one’s political allegiances and economic status: it was opposed by those who believed in a common South Slav state, the intelligentsia and Stjepan and Ante Radić of the Peasant Party (although maybe not its membership), but it won the backing of priests, students and the petit-bourgeois traders of Zagreb who accounted for the rank and file of extreme nationalists.¹³ These socio-economic tensions also came to a head during the Annexation Crisis of 1908. In October of that year, Austria-Hungary formally annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina. Since Croat nationalists, like Starčević, had long considered Bosnia to be a constituent part of

Croatia, when Serb and Muslim peasants rose up against Austrian rule, the Frankists created National Croat Legionaries comprised of young students and workers to crush the rebellion and expel the Serbs from Bosnia, by force if necessary.¹⁴

The upsurge in national tensions between Serbs and Croats was only half the story. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Croat and Serb politicians in Croatia were also beginning to co-operate together in a meaningful way, united by the prospect of a common South Slav state and the belief that Serbs and Croats were linguistically and culturally alike. This was especially true in Dalmatia where western European influences were starting to make themselves felt. In October 1905, the Dalmatian politicians Ante Trumbić and Frano Supilo and others met in the city of Rijeka, producing the so-called Rijeka Resolution. The Rijeka Resolution not only demanded independence for Croatia and Slavonia but it also called for free elections, press freedom and free assembly. The Resolution was supported by both Croat and Serb parties; shortly after, Serb leaders in Croatia released their own Resolution in support of Rijeka though they also demanded that Serbs in Croatia be recognised as nation. By December 1905 Croat and Serb political parties had formed the Croat–Serb Coalition (*Hrvatsko-Srpska koalicija*) and in the elections of 1906 it briefly won power.¹⁵

The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 by a Bosnian Serb student, Gavrilo Princip, emphasised, however, just how fragile such reconciliation was. On the night after the assassination, there were serious anti-Serb riots throughout Croatia and Bosnia. With the outbreak of the First World War, Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia became the subject of Austro-Hungarian fury and they launched a campaign to destroy the Serb bourgeoisie in Bosnia, aided by Croatian nationalists. The war of Austrian military forces against the Serb population was especially brutal and unforgiving. The Habsburg authorities created a special detachment eleven thousand strong, made up of native Croats and Muslims. The formation of the Schutzkorps, as they were known, was supposed to be a preventative measure against Serb “bandits.” However, they soon earned a reputation as a brutal paramilitary unit, notorious for their

persecution of Serbs. In towns such as Foča and Goradžde, the Bosnian Serb middle-class élite – students, teachers and professors – were executed. By 1915, the Austro-Hungarian authorities had expelled over five thousand Serb citizens from Bosnia and thousands more had been interned in concentration camps.¹⁶ Such actions were legitimated by the writing and publication of ethnographic tracts which combined Darwinist theories about racial biology with traditional historical grudges. The most infamous of these amateur wartime ethnographers was a lawyer from Mostar, Ivo Pilar, who in a notorious study claimed Bosnia as a Croat land on the basis that Serbs were a racially inferior, alien tribe of nomads prone to avarice, hatred and moral decadence.¹⁷

Studies such as Pilar's were far from simply reflecting the mindset of a few isolated individuals. In fact, they relied for many of their ideas on popular prejudices. Amongst Croatian intellectuals and politicians there was a consensus that Bosnia should be seen as an integral part of Croatia and that it represented a dividing line between the Catholic, civilised values of the West and the backward Balkan ideas of the East.¹⁸ Stjepan Radić, for example, explained as early as 1920 to a French newspaper that Croatia's geographical position "makes us federalists in order not to be dependent upon the Balkans which are, whatever one might say, an extension of Asia. Our duty is to Europeanise these Balkans, and not to Balkanise the Croats and Slovenes."¹⁹ The idea of Croatia (including Bosnia) as a border between the civilised East and the Asiatic East was popularised in 1920s Croatia by anthropologists such as Ćiro Truhelka and Milan Šufflay: Šufflay argued that due to the cultural and racial differences of Serbs and Croats they could not co-exist in the same state. Croats belonged to a civilised, Western world incompatible with the Balkanness of the Serbs.²⁰ By no means all Croatian writers felt like this. In the early days of Yugoslavia even some nationalist writers saw Croatia not as a wall against the savage Balkans but rather as a bridge between East and West. Albert Haler believed that there was no intrinsic difference between the east and west and no historical cleavage; Filip Lukas argued that "We Croats, with one foot in the Balkans and with the other in the West, are like a bridge between two worlds";²¹ Dinko Šimunović actually rejected

the rationalism of the west in favour of the “legends, poems and mysticism” of the east.²² Other writers argued that Yugoslavs should simply rise above the paradigms of East and West and create a new, Yugoslav culture “as the only possible exit from the circle of opposites of East and West in whose shackles we still languish.”²³

The Kingdom of Yugoslavia saw itself as liberal and progressive where minority rights were concerned. It had been a signatory of the Treaty on the Defence of National Minorities of St Germain in 1919 and its political and monarchical leaders often spoke with pride of its multi-national and multi-confessional nature. However, its rhetoric did not always match the reality. While there was no specific discrimination against the constituent nations of the state, the same could not be said of national minorities, such as Germans and Hungarians, who were barred from voting in elections initially and denied schooling in their own language despite their protestations of loyalty to their Yugoslav homeland.²⁴ On the other hand, apart from some hostility shown towards Jews in the initial years of the Yugoslav state, when they were associated with Frankist sentiment, anti-Semitism was rare. The main Serb parties, the Radical party of Nikola Pašić and the Democratic Party of Ljubomir Davidović were supportive of the Jewish minority, had Jewish representatives and won most of the Jewish votes. Since these parties were seen as advocating Great Serb policies, Jews earned the hostility of other parties, especially the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation and the Croatian Peasant Party.²⁵ Until the rise of Nazism, Zionism was not a popular cause amongst Yugoslav Jews and most Jews were, or at least, wanted to be fully integrated into Yugoslav society.²⁶ During the mid-1930s, anti-Semitism began to increase amongst both the Yugoslav public and Yugoslavist intelligentsia and writers started to raise the suggestion that native Jews were inherently hostile to the Yugoslav ideal and were not to be trusted.²⁷ In reaction, the government felt compelled to sponsor a number of books defending the Jews, pointing out their patriotism and arguing that anti-Semitism was alien to the Yugoslav character.²⁸ However, eventually, under pressure from the Third Reich and political currents within the country, in 1940 the government introduced a number of repressive

measures against Jews, including a number of clauses, and a ban on Jews working in the wholesale food business; opposition to such measures was simply censored.²⁹ At the same time, some of the Yugoslav media began to fall under the influence of Nazi ideas, as did some institutions such as the formerly-liberal Sokols. It banned Jews and Masons from its organisation and developed a cult of physical exercise, militarism and racial biology close to the ideology of the Hitler Youth.³⁰

The Muslim problem was recognised by Yugoslav ideologues as one of the most pressing national questions.³¹ Since Yugoslavism was perceived as a modern concept, debate about Muslims was often presented as a problem of reaction versus progress, with progress being identified with Yugoslavism. Muslim Yugoslav ideologues identified the position of women as the key to the solving of the Muslim question. They believed that woman's liberation from the veil would precipitate the defeat of reactionary conservatism and the liberalisation of Muslim society, thus speeding the assimilation of Muslims into Yugoslav society.³² Muslim religious leaders like the Reis-ul Ulema, Džemaludin Čaušević, welcomed the ostensible liberation of Muslim women who had begun to attend university, work in factories and offices and wear western dress not least because whilst women were becoming more independent and the Muslim community was becoming more secularised, the Islamic faith was accorded an equal place with other religions according to the 1921 Constitution and was well protected.³³ Since Muslims in inter-war Yugoslavia were not recognised as a national group but as a religious community, this was important. However, the major problem as far as most Muslims in Bosnia were concerned was not religious but economic. In 1919, the Government had launched a land reform programme, redistributing land from Muslim landlords to the predominantly Serb peasants who often took matters into their own hands with violence. Not only did the land reforms cause economic hardship for Muslim communities since the compensation they received for the appropriation of their land was minimal, but it did not solve the agrarian crisis since it created a system of small unproductive plots of land.³⁴ It also precipitated a social crisis. Added to almost total illiteracy amongst the

Muslim population, there were few jobs available so many Muslim families sank into destitution and bitterness. Needless to say, the 1919 land reforms also led to national conflict since at the same time Muslims had been ruined by the process, Serb banks in Bosnia had profited. To make matters worse, following the end of the First World War, many posts in institutions in Bosnia had been filled by Serbs sent from Serbia as colonialists.³⁵

During the inter-war period, the party representing most Muslims in Bosnia, the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation (*Jugoslovenska muslimanska organizacija*–JMO) tended to support the government of the day, believing that co-operation would bring its own rewards and in 1936, even joined the ruling coalition, the Yugoslav Radical Union. Thus in 1921, it voted for the Yugoslav Constitution. In return, it won rights for Muslim landlords, protection for Islam and a promise that the geographical integrity of Bosnia would be respected. From the point of view of the JMO as well as many Muslims, preserving the territorial integrity of Bosnia was their main concern.³⁶ However, with the creation of the dictatorship in 1929, Bosnia was partitioned and the Muslims lost all the land redistribution concessions they had won. Moreover, in 1939, as a result of the Sporazum, Bosnia was split again and the Muslims, in effect, were excluded from the decision-making process.³⁷

However, it was with Croats that relations were reaching the most severe impasse. In inter-war Croatia, the most popular and successful party had been Stjepan Radić's Peasant Party. In the decade prior to his assassination in 1928, Radić had veered between supporting the idea of a federal Yugoslav state and calling for an independent peasant Croatian republic. In those years, Radić's relationship with the Yugoslav state had been tempestuous: sometimes, he was imprisoned and sometimes he was invited to join the Government. Radić was undoubtedly a nationalist; he demanded a Croatian peasant republic, yet he was not a chauvinist since he remained deeply convinced of the need for South Slav reciprocity.³⁸ Radić's views were important since by 1928, the Peasant Party was the dominant political force in Croatia. Led by him, it had succeeded in removing the divisions of city and village as well as bridging the gulf between

peasants and intellectuals which had for so long marked national life. Always suspicious of Yugoslav-orientated intellectuals, ordinary Croats rallied to Radić's vision of agrarian rights, anti-clericalism and nationalism, especially when he was under attack by Belgrade. Drawing peasants away from the influences of Communism, fascism and clericalism, Radić can be seen as having built a truly national party and as having completed the process of national integration begun in the nineteenth century.³⁹ With Radić's death, and with it his inspirational leadership, the Peasant Party, led by Maček, his successor as Party leader, fragmented. While in electoral terms it was still powerful, it became increasingly chauvinist and conservative.⁴⁰ Throughout the 1930s, it became infiltrated by supporters of the Frankists and Ustashas. It also created its own paramilitary units, the Peasant Defence Force and the Citizen Defence Force, whose members joined the Ustashas en masse in April 1941. Rank and file followers of the Peasant Party too, for lack of strong leadership, embraced extreme alternatives on the left and the right.

In 1939 an autonomous Croatian Banovina was carved out of Croatia and parts of Bosnia as a response to increasing separatist feelings amongst Croats. In effect, it created an independent nationalist Croatian state. By this time, Ustasha sympathisers had not only infiltrated the Peasant Party, but they were also gaining control over many public institutions. The creation of the Banovina did not solve the national tensions in the Yugoslav state either: in fact, it exacerbated them. With its creation, Serbs and Croats who declared themselves as Yugoslavs became second-class citizens, subject to discrimination and even persecution.⁴¹ The leading newspaper in Croatia, for example, declared that the new state would no longer be able to pay the wages of that "considerable number of individuals whose behaviour has earned them the distrust of the Croatian nation."⁴² Such developments aggravated national feeling in Serbia. The Serbian Cultural Club led by the historian, Slobodan Jovanović, asked why, if Croats were allowed their own autonomous state, other national groups were not given the same right?⁴³ Moreover, although the Banovina was supported by the leadership of Croatian and Bosnian Serb parties (such as the Independent Democratic Party),

there was significant opposition at the small town and village level. The creation of the Banovina prompted the formation of militant Serb organisations such as “Serbs, Gather Together!” that opposed the concept of an autonomous Croatia in principle. The Banovina did not even please Croat nationalist circles who wanted an independent Greater Croatia and Ustashas and Frankists propagandised in villages, towns and at universities against both the Croat Banovina and Maček as a lackey of the Serbs.⁴⁴

In the late 1930s, the nationalist atmosphere was also evident in the work of Croatian intellectuals. Studies began to appear arguing that the Croat nation was threatened with extinction due to its low population growth and the exponential growth of the Serbian population in Bosnia and Croatia.⁴⁵ Many books reserved a special animus for the activities of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Bosnia and Croatia which was alleged to have created a false consciousness, transforming Orthodox Croats into Serbs, and reducing the percentage of the population which was Croatian. For example, one furious treatise by a Croatian priest claimed that Serbs had outbred Croats by forcing them to convert to Orthodoxy through a “system of torture and persecution.” Priests arriving in Bosnia after the Ottoman invasion, he explained, accompanied by Vlach shepherds and Morlochs, had taken the Croats’ “living space.” Worse, perhaps, these new settlers were, he alleged, citing Šufflay, a “dark nomadic Slav element of a very alien blood.”⁴⁶ This nationalist hostility to the Serbs was not just limited to their presence in Croatia but also their behaviour and economic status. Serbs were perceived by nationalists as a disloyal minority constantly betraying Croatia and siding with its enemies; they were the representatives of the Great Serb Belgrade bourgeoisie which wanted to destroy Croatia and Croa^tdom. The flourishing of Serb banks, businesses and institutions were merely a new attempt to “enervate and weaken” Croatia.⁴⁷ The Serbs were also said to be in an alliance with Jewish Communists to defend Yugoslavia. In other words, Serbs, like Jews in Nazi Germany, simply became a metaphor for everything Croatian nationalists hated about the society in which they lived.⁴⁸

The ideas of fascism and Nazism were also having a direct impact. In the run-up to the fortieth anniversary of the death of Starčević nationalist Croat writers marked the occasion by portraying him as a prophet of Nazism and an advocate of racial purity.⁴⁹ Fascist ideas regarding the economy, labour relationships and race were growing in influence and becoming part of the official discourse of intellectuals and organisations.⁵⁰ Anti-Semitism was also growing. In the late 1930s, Frankist students demands for a numerus clausus against Jews at the University of Zagreb were becoming more numerous and violent.⁵¹ Other student groups such as The Brothers of the Croatian Dragon posted leaflets around the Zagreb University campus proclaiming death to the Jews. Meanwhile, nationalist student and workers' journals called openly for the expulsion of Jews from Croatian towns in the name of social justice.⁵² Working-class readers wrote letters to these journals protesting their Aryan origins and their proud refusal to mix with Jews. They vowed that when the time was right, the workers of Croatia would settle accounts with Jewish leaders.⁵³ However, anti-Semitism was not simply restricted to such groups but resonated in Croatian institutions such as the Catholic Church and its laical bodies; in the mid-1930s, a series of books emerged from Catholic publishing houses which linked Jews with Communism or sought to justify the Nazi persecution of Jews.⁵⁴

Ersatz Jews? The Croatian Serbs and Cultural Stereotypes as Genocide

Long before the creation of the Independent State of Croatia, the Ustashas had decided to exterminate the Serbs of Croatia. During their twelve years in exile, they had developed a methodical plan for the solving of the Serbian problem. The Ustashas' intentions were revealed in the first few days of the existence of the new State when a former Yugoslav captain, Ivan Babić, an adjutant to Slavko Kvaternik, informed two incredulous Croatian officials, Hrvoje Mezulić and Nikola Jasinsky, that the new rulers intended to slaughter all the Serbs. He explained, however, that the Ustashas thought it would be necessary to murder

only about half of the Serbs – the educated classes and the social élite; the rest could be converted to Catholicism or expelled to Serbia. The mass atrocities committed against the Serbs between 1941 and 1945 were not the tragic but inevitable consequence of war; nor were they the result of the actions of a few deranged and irresponsible individuals. They represented a premeditated campaign to create a nationally homogeneous state through the destruction of an entire people.⁵⁵ Ustashas in Italy led by Mijo Babić had also devised a plan for the establishment of concentration camps for prospective enemies of the state.⁵⁶ As with the Jews in Nazi Germany, the Ustashas planned to lead a war of destruction against their Serb population. In the absence of a large Jewish population, Croatian and Bosnian Serbs became the target of a visceral nationalistic hatred which in other east European satellite states would have been expressed through anti-Semitism. The Serbs were the Ustashas' ersatz Jews.

In common with other genocidal regimes, immediately the Ustashas assumed power, leading officials and mass media launched a campaign of propaganda to demonise the Serbs and portray them as dangerous enemies of Croatia.⁵⁷ Simultaneously, harsh and arbitrary laws were introduced to legally isolate Serbs from their Croatian friends and neighbours. These laws not only sent a warning to Serbs that their lives in the new state were impossible and they were an unwanted minority but they also showed to Croatian people that the Serbs in their midst were a foreign element. A series of laws of the first month of the state made the very Serbian identity illegal: the Cyrillic script was banned; the Serbian Orthodox Church was outlawed; Serbian settlers from the period of the First World War lost their land and property; Serb army officers and state employees were sacked en masse; Serbian cultural and educational institutions were closed and appropriated by the state and Ustasha activists. In fact, Serbs as such no longer existed: they were now to be known as "Greek-Easterners."⁵⁸ If this was not enough, all traces of their history of existence in Croatia were also eradicated; streets, villages and public buildings were assigned Croat names and monuments erected to Serb kings and historical figures were torn down; imposing Orthodox cathedrals were burnt to the ground. For example, in Mitrovica, streets

previously named after Marko Kraljević and King Peter were renamed after martyred Ustasha youth and deceased Ustasha warriors such as Antun Pogorelec and Mijo Babić. In Banja Luka, the local football stadium was renamed after the governor of the Bosanska Krajina region, Viktor Gutić.⁵⁹

In cities such as Sarajevo and Zagreb almost immediately Serbs were expelled from their homes and confined to ghettos. There they were subject to curfews which severely restricted the hours in which they could be outside and they were forced to wear insignia identifying their ethnic origin: in Požega, for example, Serbs were compelled to wear a blue armband with the letter P which stood for “Pravoslavac” (Orthodox).⁶⁰ Much of this was a prelude to the expulsion of thousands of Serbs who were to be sent to Serbia. It was envisaged that the remaining population would be converted to Roman Catholicism, the complicated rules of which were changed overnight to make conversion easier; by this process, ordinary Serbs would be transformed into Croats. For educated and middle-class Serbs, as well as Orthodox priests, this was not an option since the Ustasas argued that their identity was too strong to be overcome. However, since the Ustasas argued that their state was a legal and just one, they realised that they needed to introduce some kind of constitutional measure which would provide genocide with the cloak of legality. One such answer was to be found in the “Law For the Defence of the Nation and the State” which gave the Ustasas the right to punish with death anyone who had “offended the honour and vital interests of the Croatian people or in any way the existence of the Independent State of Croatia or state powers, by deed or by attempt.”⁶¹ To deal with the large numbers of people they wanted to murder, people’s courts were established, administered by legal experts and judges sympathetic to the Ustasha cause. If a guilty verdict had been reached by these courts – and invariably it was – the defendant had to be sentenced to death. There could be no appeal and the sentence had to be carried out by firing squad within two hours. Another statute legalised the transferral to concentration camps of all “unworthy individuals” considered “dangerous to public order and security or who could threaten the peace and tranquillity of the Croatian people.”⁶²

In order to legitimise the summary arrest and execution of citizens of Croatia, Ustasha propaganda played deliberately on the bitter memories and experiences of the inter-war period. As early as April 1941, Bosnian and Croatian newspaper reports announced the arrest, trials and, in many cases, execution of high-ranking officials, some of whom were accused of the torture and mistreatment of Croatian nationalists prior to 1941, or who were held to have violated the honour of Croatia. The wave of orchestrated and publicised vendettas in the summer of 1941 were sometimes intensely personal to the Ustasha Movement: thus one Zagreb newspaper announced the arrest of an official implicated in the attempted assassination of Mile Budak in the 1930s and appealed for help in the capture of the soldier involved in the (accidental) shooting of the poet, Ivo Kozarčanin in early 1941.⁶³ More usually, any prominent figure who could be seen as an enemy of the nation was arrested: directors of Yugoslavian football clubs, regional governors, alleged spies.⁶⁴ Whether a hapless Serb soldier sentenced to death or Rikard Vikert, the hated Zagreb police chief and “torturer of nationalist students,” their crimes, real or imagined, were publicised in lurid detail.⁶⁵ If this was not enough to remind citizens of the misery and brutality of the Yugoslav era and the inherent justness of the Ustasha cause, then a number of sensational show trials surely did. In May 1941, the former head of the tax office in Jajce, Djorđe Radivojshi, was put on trial for the murder of Fuad Dervić in the 1930s, an “innocent and honourable Croat” who had been selected to replace him because of the former’s corruption. A subsequent report revealed that at his first trial no less a figure than the Patriarch Gavriilo had defended him. How could any honourable Croat oppose the Ustashas or their war against such corruption and violence?⁶⁶ At the same time as the trial of Radivojshi, the trial of Dušan Biberić, director of the State Hypertek Bank, was under way. He was arrested with Dušan Subotić, not only a tormentor of Croats in the former Yugoslavia but also allegedly the ringleader of a Serb terrorist group and the organiser of Serb peasant rebels in the new Croatian state. The case illustrated the way in which the Ustashas used propaganda to suggest that prominent Serbs were intimately involved in attempts to undermine Croatia. In the report, all the prominent Serbs

arrested were labelled Chetniks (a reference to a Serb nationalist movement which had been active in suppressing Croatian and Muslim rebellions in inter-war Yugoslavia with the use of force). Throughout the summer of 1941, Croatian newspapers announced the capture of groups of Serb Chetniks, who were invariably not Chetniks but local Serb politicians, captured plotting with priests to destroy Croatia. These traitorous cliques would, newspapers assured their readers, "receive the deserved punishment."⁶⁷ The show trials of bank managers, priests and the educated élite reflects the fact that the propaganda war against the Serbs was portrayed as much as a class and social war as an ethnic conflict; Serbs were to be hated not just for what they were but also what they possessed. Although the Ustashas were keen to stress their civilised European outlook as opposed to the barbarism of the Serbs, they also emphasised that many of those same bestial captured Chetniks were "sons of the most respected Serbian families in the region."⁶⁸

Popular opinion concerning the fate of the Serbs appears to have differed. Some Croats and Bosnian Muslims protected their Serbian co-nationals, whilst others actively turned on them and, especially in Bosnia, Croats and Muslims participated in the slaughter of their Serbian neighbours. It seems most Croats were willing to accept and support the draconian laws which had been introduced, even when such laws affected their friends and employees, either because they believed in the propaganda of the Ustasha regime that the persecution of Serbs and Jews was necessary for the salvation of the Croatian nation or else because they saw the terror of the Ustashas as an opportunity to settle old scores or make a better life for themselves. Thus Drago Zubetić could write a letter to the Main Commissariat for Propaganda requesting ownership of a radio "confiscated from those Serbs and Jews" because he was an "honourable Croat nationalist who was really persecuted in the Yugoslav era."⁶⁹ Likewise, an anonymous disgruntled cinema employee could contact the same Commissariat to inform them that the cinema he worked at in Zagreb was not only still employing Serbs but was run by a manager who was an integral Yugoslav, "who always and still is in Serb societies and keeps company with former Serb

officers.”⁷⁰ Although there were complaints about the behaviour of Ustashas, it often came with an element of self-interest. A secret Ustasha report of 1942 which recorded the behaviour of a local Ustasha chieftain noted that locals were terrified of him and looked unfavourably on the fact that he had confiscated the land of Jews and Serbs. The reason for this dismay soon became apparent: “People did not expect that the land would be given to him. No! They hoped to buy the land for a little money and cultivate it themselves and not, as has happened, now work for a small wage for one Ustasha instead of the wage they used to get under the former owner a Jew, Stern.” The report also recorded their anger that a Jew, Sandoer, not a Croat, had been selected to supply foodstuffs for Jasenovac. Was there not one Croat qualified to carry out this work, it asked?⁷¹

The propaganda in any case was unforgiving enough. The statements of leading Ustashas at a series of rallies in the summer of 1941 were designed to create an atmosphere in which the persecution and mass murder of the Serb minority would be legitimated. One propaganda method favoured by the Ustashas was to suggest that the Serbs were the greatest enemies of the Croatian people and that they were an inherent danger for the survival of the Croatian state. The Poglavnik, Pavelić, set the mood. In his speech at the huge Ustasha Zagreb rally in May 1941, Pavelić had accused the Serbs of wanting to wipe Croatia from the face of the earth. He pointed out that Croats were now the masters and others would be their subjects. This idea of a Serb peril was seized on by his ministers. According to Milovan Žanić, president of the Legislative Council, the time had come for the Serbs to leave Croatia; in his opinion, as long as the question of the Serbs was not resolved, this state would be unstable. He declared:

Ustashas! You know I speak openly: this state, this Homeland of ours, must be Croat and no one else's. And those who emigrated here must leave. The events of centuries and especially the last 20 years have shown that any compromise is precluded. This has to be a land of Croats and no one else's and there are no methods which we would not use to make this land truly Croat and cleanse it of all Serbs who have imperilled us for centuries and who would imperil us again at the first opportunity. We are not concealing the fact that this is the policy of our state and when it is implemented we will only be implementing the ideas written in the Ustasha Principles.⁷²

In Banja Luka, Viktor Gutić, spoke even more explicitly about the Serbs. “I have published drastic laws for their complete economic destruction and new ones will follow for their complete extermination. Don’t be generous towards any of them. Bear in mind that they were always our gravediggers and destroy them wherever they may be found and the blessings of the Poglavnik and myself will be upon you.” He gave all “foreign” Serbs five days to leave his province in Bosnia or else be removed by force.⁷³ Such statements were not merely the inflammatory comments of a few officials since they were sentiments echoed in Ustasha publications. An editorial in the third issue of the journal of the Ustasha Movement, for example, declared that the time to settle accounts had arrived and the “criminal nests” and “that unfortunate human essence” which had always conspired against the prosperity of the Croat nation would be exterminated. In short, Croatia would be “cleansed from all that crap. From all those criminals and from everything which does not belong in the Croatian nation.”⁷⁴

The Ustashes also emphasised the alien and foreign nature of Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia. The novelist, Mile Budak, Minister for Religion and Cults, argued that the Serbs of Croatia and Bosnia were not really Serbs at all “but people brought here from the East by the Turks who used them as vassals and servants, water carriers and beggars who fell on the destroyed hearths of Croats like locusts.”⁷⁵ For Budak, Serbs were racially inferior: they were Vlachs and gypsies, devious and agile, the sworn enemies of the Croats. In his populist manner, he compared Croatia to a house occupied by an enemy who refused to leave the owner’s abode. “I would not ask a priest or nun for help,” he explained to his audience, “but I would chase him out with an axe.”⁷⁶ However, the Ustashes could also make reference to Croat ethnographers, anthropologists and scholars and thus demonstrate that their ideas about the racial alienness of the Serbs was grounded not in prejudice or hatred but legitimate science. Ivo Pilar’s infamous study of 1918 was translated into Croatian for a mass audience and he quickly entered the pantheon of Ustasha racial theorists as did Ćiro Truhelka, a renowned Croatian ethnographer. Both of them, as already mentioned, were extreme nationalists and known advocates of the Vlach theory of Serb origins in Bosnia;

both were also ideal intellectual resources for the Ustashas since in addition to their ethnographical findings, they had, like Šufflay, suffered discrimination and persecution at the hands of the pre-war Yugoslav regime. In 1942, Truhelka's last major theoretical works as well as his memoirs, restated his theory that the problems of the region were caused by the fact that Serbs were "ethnically a foreign racial element who, geopolitically speaking, belong to a different cultural sphere." Serbs in Bosnia could be distinguished by their "dark and swarthy" appearance. As an immigrant population, they should be seen as guests of Croatia who had no entitlement to property or rights.⁷⁷

Young Croat intellectuals were keen to follow the path Truhelka and Pilar had blazed. For Smail Balić, the supposedly Asiatic blood of the Vlachian Serbs made them more dangerous even than the Jews, especially in a time of war and even more so when they pretended to be friendly to their neighbours. Like Truhelka, too, for Balić, the Vlachs were not only racially different, but they also displayed a number of vices which were alien and damaging to the Croatian nation such as corruption, disloyalty, avarice and sexual degeneracy.⁷⁸ Of course, the intellectual whom the Ustashas worshipped and cherished above all others was Starčević who they believed expressed the very spirit of their Movement. His writings and ideas were easy for the Ustashas to manipulate for their own uses. For one thing, the Ustashas could and did argue that the ideology of the Ustasha movement and Starčević emerged from the same Croatian source since there were veteran Starčević activists in the Ustasha Movement such as the first speaker of the Sabor, Marko Došen, and Slavko Kvaternik (a direct descendant of Starčević's collaborator, Eugen Kvaternik). It was only a small step from that to arguing that the ideology of Starčević and the ideology of the Ustashas were one and the same and, furthermore, that the policies the Ustashas were pursuing were simply the implementation of traditional Croatian principles of statehood. Moreover, for nationalist academics, there was much material in the writing of the father of the nation which seemed to echo Ustasha propaganda and they repeated his most vituperative anti-Serb comments with glee. Starčević, they argued, was a proto Ustasha.⁷⁹ Like Starčević who had sometimes accused Serbs of endeavouring to

steal Croatian national figures and history, nationalist intellectuals also asserted that Serbs had attempted to appropriate and claim as their own Croatian history and culture.⁸⁰ What was worse than this thievery, fumed the author of one such study, was that the people who were attempting this were “a pack of racially mongrel and unrefined people...the most barbaric, criminal element which ever stepped on Europe’s soil.”⁸¹ The campaign of demonisation by some intellectuals often went as far as to advocate their wholesale destruction. Vatroslav Murvar wrote that the Serbs were a “rabble of immigrant Vlachs” living in the heart of Croatia who “constantly spat on the land and people who had accepted them, they were always traitors.” The Croats had to be prepared for every solution. Whereas Starčević had sometimes written that the assimilation of native Serbs would liberate Croatia from foreign influence and help create a viable nation-state, young acolytes like Murvar saw Croatia’s salvation and liberation in their physical annihilation.⁸²

In most genocidal and totalitarian regimes throughout history, mass murder of national or religious groups has usually been preceded by official propaganda and persecutory laws. This has served as a means of preparing public opinion for the imposition of terror.⁸³ The Ustasha Movement is perhaps unique in that its campaign of genocide started immediately. The earliest recorded massacre of Serbs took place in Bjelovar on 27-28 April 1941 with the arrest and execution of 176 Serbs by members of the Peasant Defence Force. In fact, even as Ustashas had arrived back in Croatia on 10 April, some convoys had made a point of stopping at Serb villages on the journey to Zagreb, arresting the inhabitants and warning them what was going to happen to them in the future. Throughout the summer months, Ustasha militias such as the Poglavnik’s Bodyguard and the Ustasha Defence Regiment of Mijo Babić swept through Serb villages and small towns in a campaign of terror. Men and women, the old and the young, children and adults were rounded up by the militias, driven into the countryside by truck, tied together and shot or thrown over the edges of cliffs, ravines or into rivers. In the most notorious cases, whole communities were buried alive.⁸⁴

Although the Ustashas aimed to simply massacre what they saw as the Serb middle and educated classes – judges, teachers, lawyers, merchants and rich farmers – and convert the mass of ordinary peasants to Catholicism and thus make them Croats, in reality, Ustasha militias targeted Serbian peasants as much as they attacked the community elite. The policy to convert the mass of Serbs to Catholicism, officially announced on 5 May 1941 by the Poglavnik, was often used as a pretext by Ustasha militias to commit massacres. In the town of Glina in June 1941, for example, seven hundred Serbian men from surrounding villages were brought to the Orthodox church in Glina, believing that they were about to be converted to Catholicism. Instead, they were forced to shout Ustasha slogans such as “Long Live the Poglavnik!” and watch selected victims being tortured and then murdered. That night, all but one of the men was murdered: their skulls were crushed with rifle butts, they were stabbed to death and, in many cases, they had their throats slit. There was so much blood that the Ustashas had to change their uniforms numerous times. On other occasions, Serb villagers were locked inside churches which were then set on fire.⁸⁵

Many of those who have studied the nature of Ustasha genocide between 1941 and 1945 have pointed to its personal nature. Aleksa Djilas has pointed out that the first massacres were directed against people the Ustasha militias knew – for example, friends and neighbours. Unlike the Nazis, large-scale technology as a means of extermination was not used. Instead, the Ustashas used knives, axes and sickles. Although these implements were used partly because there was not the access to advanced technology, such as gas chambers, the choice of weapons also served a powerful symbolic purpose. The knife, for example, was a constant image in Ustasha iconography and was eulogised by them. For the Ustashas, the knife represented a noble Croatian weapon of war, used by warriors through history, from the Uskoks of Senj to Ban Jelačić; moreover, since it involved hand-to-hand combat and looking the enemy straight in the eye, it seemed to be braver and more valiant. However, from a certain anthropological viewpoint, the knife also served to emphasise the personal and emotional nature of the Ustasha slaughter of the Serbs. To kill with a knife, one must be physically close to the

victim and one must hold them in order to murder them; there is no “distance” between tormentor and victim as there is with a gun or bomb. Moreover, it was quite common for the Ustashas to mutilate their victims after death, and amputate body parts; on occasion, individual Ustashas practised cannibalism. Undoubtedly, members of Ustasha militias were induced into committing grisly crimes by a number of factors: political indoctrination, propaganda, threats, drink and the general fanaticised ideology of the Movement. However, the practice of mutilation had a long tradition in the Balkans as writers such as Edith Durham had discovered. The eating of an adversary signified receiving his soul and his strength.⁸⁶ Yet it also reduced the victim to the level of an animal and signified an intense level of hate. In addition, it demonstrated that the members of the Movement had liberated themselves from all of the former Yugoslav society’s codes of conduct; it allowed the Ustashas to be “wholly free.” In Balkan societies, the taking of blood of an enemy was often seen as noble and a duty, however painful or dangerous it might be; it had a religious ritualistic quality. Therefore, the massacres are to be understood in terms of a “ritualisation of slaughter” and “slaughter as sacrament” in which the victims represented a sacrificial offering.⁸⁷ That the method of killing conveyed a profound meaning is borne out by the fact that, although the Ustashas exterminated Jews and gypsies in large numbers, they were not usually killed in the same manner as Serbs because the Ustashas did not feel as emotionally strongly about them.

It is not known how many Serbs fell victim to the Ustasha terror. Certainly, far fewer than one million Serbs were murdered by the Ustashas between 1941 and 1945 as some Serbian historians have claimed. Serb nationalist groups, such as the various Chetnik formations, also committed atrocities, especially against Muslims in Bosnia.⁸⁸ Whilst, studies in the 1980s and 1990s suggested that far fewer Serbs had died in the Independent State of Croatia than originally believed, they ignored an important fact. The percentages of ethnic groups killed between 1941 and 1945 in Bosnia and Croatia illustrate clearly that Serbs were targeted for destruction. In Bosnia, more than seventy percent of all war victims were Serbs and in Croatia more than fifty per cent. This means nearly as high a percentage of

Serbs died in Bosnia where they represented an absolute minority as did in Serbia itself where they constituted the overwhelming majority: in other words, for Serbs, the Ustashas were worse than the Nazis (see Appendix B).⁸⁹

Moreover, even if far fewer than one million Serbs died at the hands of the Ustashas, hundreds of thousands were still murdered by them. Such statistics suggest that large numbers of ordinary Croats must have participated in the massacres of Serbs, either as part of local militias or on their own initiative. As Aleksa Djilas has written, the Ustashas liked to involve as many members of the Movement in their genocidal acts as possible, in part to forge a bond between ordinary soldiers and their commanders and also to bind them more closely to the Movement. By making them complicit in war crimes, they were more likely to fight fanatically for the Movement for fear of what would happen to them if they were caught alive by the enemy. However, some Croat civilians also committed massacres against their Serb brethren. According to the testimony of Serb survivors in Rogatica, Bosnia, Croats, “our neighbours, to whom we did no harm, changed overnight, displaying a readiness all at once to kill us. They spoke out in public, in threatening tones, advocating that all Serbs be killed, even our small children, so that there would not be a single Serb left in Bosnia.” In one notorious case in Šargovac, Croat neighbours invited local Serbs to their home in a gesture of supposed friendship and then massacred them with fork and axes.⁹⁰

Although massacres were made public in the localities in which they took place, in the national press they were reported in a completely different manner. An excellent example of the way in which the Ustashas used their acts of genocide as propaganda was the massacre of Serbs in the Kozara Mountains in the summer of 1942. In July 1942, an élite Ustasha unit, the Black Legion, led by Colonel Jure Francetić, launched a bloody military raid on the Kozara Mountains, an area of Bosnia where the Ustashas believed that Serbs were planning a rebellion. In the event, there was no rebellion and nor is it likely there had ever been one. Despite this, thousands of innocent and defenceless Serb civilians – men, women and children, to the disgust of German officers - were hacked to death and their mutilated bodies flung into the River Drina. When it was reported in the national

newspapers, the events of Kozara were written about as an operation to “cleanse” Croatia of its bandits and criminals. The orphans created by such massacres were placed in orphanages to be brought up by nuns as good Ustashas and publicly described as Croatian orphans victimised by Partisan atrocities.⁹¹ According to newspaper reports of the time, Jewish and Serbian Partisans from Serbia had indoctrinated the simple peasants of Kozara with Communism who had risen up against the state on the instructions of Moscow and terrorised local Croats who had only been saved by the Ustashas. Furthermore, the reports continued, the Black Legion had liberated the inhabitants from the depredations of the Partisans whose crimes had included forcing people to eat their own flesh.⁹² Since the Ustashas saw Chetniks and Partisans as indistinguishable and simply different manifestations of Great Serbian hegemony who aimed at the “destruction of the Croatian nation,” they often emphasised the pro-Serb nature of the Partisans.⁹³ Ivan Softa, a writer of nationalist social novels, argued that the “current burning of our villages and the slaughter of our children is nothing other than the logical natural development of the executions at Jelačić Square in 1918 and Aleksandar’s prisons and gallows.” He noted sardonically: “The town of Grad was completely destroyed, except the Orthodox Church. Surprising, isn’t it?”⁹⁴

The events at Kozara of 1942 provide a graphic illustration of the way in which Ustasha propaganda worked: the victims of the Ustashas were portrayed as subhuman aggressors. To reinforce the image of virtuous Ustashas and bestial Serb Partisans, young male prisoners captured at Kozara, most of whom were later murdered or sent to their deaths at Jasenovac, were described in physically unprepossessing terms. With their emaciated faces, black unkempt beards and filthy rags still stained “with the blood of the innocent,” they fitted the racial profile of the murderous Balkan savage. The press also told lurid tales of sadistic female killers who had defied the natural role which providence had assigned to them as wives and mothers. By emphasising that the captured bandits would be treated humanely and sent to the collection camp at Jasenovac for re-education, a further contrast was made between the Ustashas and their vanquished foes.⁹⁵ As for Colonel Francetić, who had instigated the bloodshed, the Bosnian press

eulogised him. It waxed lyrical about his slim, tall appearance and his intellectual expression, portraying him as the liberator of Croatian peasants from Chetnik-Communist terror.⁹⁶

The Jasenovac “collection” camp mentioned in the newspaper report on Kozara was the largest and most brutal of the many concentration camps the Ustashas established during the existence of their State.⁹⁷ Its construction was begun in August 1941 with a newspaper article announcing irrigation improvements on the fields of Lonška.⁹⁸ In fact, the irrigation work was carried out by Serb and Jewish prisoners who helped to build the foundations of their own prison. The camp was run by the notorious Bureau 3 of the Ustasha Supervisory Service, the Ustasha Defence Force. It was originally led by Mijo Babić, and then by Colonel Vjekoslav (Maks) Luburić following Babić’s death in battle. Conditions in the camp were appalling: rations were almost non-existent and the prisoners were further weakened by the arduous manual work the inmates were forced to carry out. The tough nature of the work was deliberate since it was reasoned this would help to kill off inmates more quickly. If this did not have the desired effect, then the behaviour of the Ustasha guards usually did. Led by the sadistic Luburić, whom even high-ranking German officers viewed with nothing but disdain, the Ustasha guards, many of whom were young and fanatical nationalists, found themselves in charge of an enemy population they had complete control over. Jasenovac was marked by arbitrary savagery and murder with axes, knives, clubs and guns and by April 1945 more than 100,000 inmates had been murdered.⁹⁹

Naturally, the Ustashas never portrayed Jasenovac Camp in this way.¹⁰⁰ For them it was a work camp where politically-suspect prisoners were to be re-educated. Nevertheless, news about the reality of the camp must have been widespread since the Ustashas were very nervous about any mention in the press of the Ustasha Defence Force. In 1942, the State Investigative and Propaganda Bureau issued a missive banning any mention of the work of this unit or its commander in the media, even though some activists within the Movement had sent such details to newspapers with the “best of intentions” to show the Force in a positive light to the general public. The very fact that some activists felt the

need to send such information suggested that this unit did not have a good reputation with the public.¹⁰¹ By 1942, popular rumours regarding the treatment of inmates, not all of whom were Serbs and Jews, were sufficiently serious for the Ustasha hierarchy to embark on a propaganda campaign to improve Jasenovac's reputation. On 6 January 1942, a so-called international committee comprised of German officials, representatives of the Vatican, and Romanian, Hungarian, German and Italian journalists visited the camp. They were shown around by the head of the Supervisory Service, Eugen Dido Kvaternik. Officially, at least, they were impressed with the treatment of inmates at the camp. One of the German journalists, Hermann Proebst, wrote that inmates were producing all kinds of goods including "riding boots, saddles, various leather and blacksmith goods, bricks and tiles." He also reported that some inmates who worked in the ceramic factory had decorated pottery with "various scenes depicting the struggle between the Ustashes and the Chetniks," surely a sign of the success of their political re-education in the camp. Proebst also emphasised the kindness of the guards whom, he claimed, emphatically did not mistreat prisoners because they were chosen from the élite of young student and high school Ustashes and were replaced frequently so bad habits could not become ingrained.¹⁰² In September of that year, Luburić's men organised an exhibition of the work of inmates entitled "One year of the work of the collection camp of the Ustasha Defence Unit." The exhibition, held in a hall in central Zagreb, purported to show the reality of life in Jasenovac. In addition to photographs of smiling inmates, the exhibition portrayed Jasenovac's market-garden and showed the products made by the prisoners under the guidance of Ustasha experts. They included models, paintings, handicrafts, preserves and vegetables.¹⁰³

At the beginning of 1945, the Ustasha high command, led by Luburić and his cousin, Ljubo Miloš, a commander at the camp, decided that with the advance of the Partisans and the imminent collapse of the State, the camp would have to be closed and personnel transferred to Zagreb. The prisoners were not to be transferred, however; they were to be killed. Yet the Ustashes persisted with their propaganda until the end. In February 1945, at the invitation of the commander

of the Ustasha Defence Force, Luburić, the vice-Poglavnik, Mate Frković and a delegation, toured the villages around Jasenovac to celebrate three years of the existence of the Force. At one point, the delegation participated in a celebratory kolo dance with peasants and members of the Ustasha Defence Force.¹⁰⁴ One journalist present at this macabre celebration, Alozije Lutz, gave his own impression of Jasenovac. For Lutz, Jasenovac was like a hospital where patients could be “cured” so that they could return to healthy society, thus it was hardly surprising that the camp administrators received “piles of letters” from former inmates thanking them for introducing them to the concept of “valuable and honourable” work and that others still did not want to leave at all: “Until now, in the whole world, there has been talk only of convicts and the condemned in prisons and gaols. But we are convinced that the form of punishment here transforms unworthy members of human society so that these same members who were until yesterday dangerous and harmful are now valuable to the entire community in which they work.”¹⁰⁵

Not all enemies of the Ustashas could be re-educated, however and one of the most effective kinds of propaganda as far as the Ustashas was concerned involved publicising the alleged crimes of Serb nationalists. From the moment that the Independent State of Croatia was declared, horror stories began to circulate in the Zagreb and regional press concerning the atrocities of Chetniks and retreating Serb soldiers furious at the defeat of the Yugoslav army. At a time when Ustasha death squads comprised of fanatical (and fanaticised) young men were roaming the villages of Bosnia and Croatia and rounding up whole Serb village to be murdered, the Ustashas aimed to turn reality upside down. As early as April 1941, newspapers were reporting the bestial crimes of Chetniks: women and children were being slaughtered without mercy; the property of ordinary hard-working Croats was being burned down; village guards were being murdered in cold blood; workers were being mutilated and tortured. Worst perhaps of all, brave young Ustashas were being cut down in the prime of their youth by the scythe of Greater Serbdom.¹⁰⁶ At the funeral of one of the first émigré Ustashas to fall in battle, Antun Pogorelec, Viktor Gutić, exalted him as a sincere idealistic Ustasha

martyr who had gone to his death to liberate others. He used his death as well as that of his comrade Mijo Babić, as a rallying cry for revenge and called for the intensification of the persecution of the Serbs; they were, he said, “rabid Chetnik mobs” torturing the Hercegovinan Croats. His death proved that the Ustashas in particular and the Croatian people generally should continue “carrying death and destruction” to the Serbs.¹⁰⁷

In early 1942, to great fanfare, the Ministry of the Interior published a book entitled the *Grey Book*, a grisly chronicle of the worst crimes of Serb Chetniks which had provoked “great outrage” among citizens and a “firm desire to deal with these dregs of society once and for all.”¹⁰⁸ The themes of the book were familiar. They portrayed the Partisans and Chetniks as intellectualised Jews and bloodthirsty Serbs intent on crushing the independence-minded aspirations of the honest Croatian people.¹⁰⁹ A book written by Mile Starčević, the Minister for Education, to commemorate the publication of the *Grey Book* alleged that the roots of the conflict in Croatia could be found in the “furious hatred” of élite Serbs for the Independent State of Croatia who with priests, criminal Serbs and Jews had mislead ordinary Serbs into committing atrocities. According to Starčević, “If any revolution was peaceful, then it was surely the Croatian revolution of April 1941!” For him, the first violence was instigated by Serb nationalists who committed a slaughter at Čaplina as early as the 13 April 1941.¹¹⁰ Such claims were untrue, but this was scarcely important since many ordinary Croats were perfectly prepared to accept the dramatic claims of the publication. Following the official launch of the book, demand was high amongst both Ustashas organisations and members of the general public and Ustasha officials and members of the public wrote to the Commissariat for Propaganda with requests for copies. Vladimir Presečki, an Ustasha leader from the Zagreb station, asked for two thousand copies owing to “overwhelming demand.” Likewise, Franjo Družak, another Ustasha functionary from the capital, reported that the book was in great demand amongst peasants and workers and “the interest from the general public is quite extraordinary.”¹¹¹ Why Croats were so eager to embrace Ustasha propaganda is a question which cannot be definitively answered.

Certainly, some who brought the book did so as supporters of the Ustasha Movement; for them, the Ustashas were decent patriotic men and their account of events made sense. Others, in a time of bewildering chaos, surely wanted to follow the voice of authority. It is arguable, however, that most Croats simply wanted to believe the Ustasha version as the alternative was too painful to bear thinking about. In any case, by the time the book was published in 1942, civil war was raging, atrocities had been committed by Partisans and various self-styled Chetnik groups and some of the horror stories in the book did correspond to the experiences of ordinary Croats.

If ordinary Croats had wanted to know the truth, they did not have far to look. Parts of the Croatian press as early as May 1941 were beginning to express grave concerns about the direction of the Ustasha revolution. The pre-eminent Catholic newspaper, which only a few weeks earlier had ecstatically welcomed the creation of the State, now talked of a new class of person who had come to power. Describing the typical new Ustasha commissar as an opportunist who served the new regime with as much enthusiasm as he had served the old Yugoslav one, an editorial condemned him as “a drunk, a fraudster, a criminal, a corrupter, a good-for-nothing, a ruffian” who plundered and murdered for the cause of personal profit and racial purity.¹¹² Clearly such complaints had to be quelled and the response of the Ustasha Movement hierarchy was swift and ruthless. In July, the Ustashas introduced a new law which mandated the death penalty for all those who spread “false” news that a part of the population was being persecuted and execution by firing squad for all Ustashas who violated the property and life of others. Despite the high-minded rhetoric, the intention of the law was not to punish Ustashas who had committed crimes; on the contrary, the edict signalled out Jews as the main propagators of false stories, and legalised their collective punishment in the event of one of their number being found guilty of such a crime. The law also invited all unCroatian elements to resign from state service and the Ustasha Movement within eight days. The law signalled the start of the official persecution of Serbs and Jews dressed up as a process of cleansing the Ustasha Movement of corrupt and criminal elements.¹¹³

This does not mean that the Movement did not take the opportunity afforded them by the new law to reinvigorate their ranks. In a well-publicised campaign entitled “Down with the Past!” the Ustashas announced in the pages of their party journal that they would purge from their ranks all careerists, profiteers and opportunists and all those who had besmirched the good name of their Movement. It was these elements – the so-called Nastashas – who would be ruthlessly weeded out.¹¹⁴ Nastasha (meaning a rascal or ne’er do well) was a term given by the Ustashas to define an unscrupulous person who had joined the Movement after 1941 for careerist or opportunist rather than ideological reasons. It was these people, who had no feeling for Ustasha ideals, whose actions were blackening its name. In August 1941, a scapegoat for the negative reputation the Movement was acquiring in some parts of the population was found in Josip Smolčić, a low-ranking regional Ustasha lieutenant, accused of raping a girl some years previously. He was executed by firing squad. Simultaneously, all Ustasha officials were fired en masse. A month later the Movement’s journal announced that the campaign of cleansing was complete and that all those like Smolčić had been removed.¹¹⁵ Although few, if any, Ustashas were punished for crimes committed against Serbs, the Ustashas’ propagandists did admit atrocities had been committed. Mijo Bzik, the historian of the Movement, devoted a section of a book to this question. Feeling a need to address the accusations levelled at the Ustashas, he admitted that in the first few months of the new order, some people in the name of the Ustashas and wearing Ustasha uniforms had carried out atrocities but they were Nastashas who had nothing in common with the “great and holy ideas” of the Ustashas and were profiteers and people from “God knows where” who had imposed themselves on the Movement to blemish its name. He also accused Partisans of stealing Ustasha clothes and carrying out atrocities to be blamed on the Ustashas. At the same time he also lambasted critics of the Ustashas for forgetting the horror of the Karadjordjević regime, a dictatorship of “police batons and rifle butts.”¹¹⁶ Others allied to the Movement were not so sure; the young intellectual, Marko Čović, writing in the pages of *Spremnost* in 1942, admitted that not even veteran Ustashas were all “angels on earth”; another

young cerebral supporter of the regime, Tias Mortigijija, believed that some Ustashas, both new and veteran members, had committed "much evil."¹¹⁷

Of all the Ustasha campaigns initiated in 1941 to destroy the Serbian population, perhaps the one which best illustrates the evolving relationship between propaganda and policy was the campaign against the Serb Orthodox Church. For the Ustashas, the Serbian Orthodox Church was a thoroughly dangerous institution since, unlike the Catholic Church, it was both a national and a religious institution and, historically, a profound symbol of Serb national consciousness. They believed that as long as it was allowed to exist, the Serbian identity in Croatia would remain strong. Therefore, in order to weaken the identity of ordinary Serbs, it would have to be destroyed. Almost immediately, local Ustasha officials ordered the arrest, expulsion and, in many cases, murder of Orthodox priests and the levelling of Orthodox churches and cathedrals; ecclesiastical property was seized and Church institutions banned.¹¹⁸ A campaign of demonisation engulfed the Serbian Orthodox Church. The destruction of the Serb Orthodox Church was a prelude to a calculated plan to convert the Serb population in Croatia and Bosnia to Catholicism. At the beginning of May 1941, a law on conversion was introduced which arbitrarily swept away the previous complex Austro-Hungarian laws on conversion and stipulated that, to convert, one needed only to register with the local authorities and fulfil the requirements of the new faith.¹¹⁹ In the same month, another law was issued by the Ministry of Justice and Religion which instructed local officials to issue documents to those people who registered for conversion confirming they had approval to convert.¹²⁰ The Catholic Church issued its own guidelines on conversion which included an request that priests act responsibly "in the delicate question of human souls" and show especial understanding for those who under pressure, for personal interests or "in a moment of weakness" had fallen away from Roman Catholicism in the Yugoslav era.¹²¹ Throughout the summer months, Orthodox Serbs converted to Catholicism en masse, whether because the local authorities forced them to, because they felt that by converting they could secure a more prosperous future

for themselves and their children or because they feared that in a now militantly Catholic state their life could only be protected if they became Roman Catholics.

In July 1941, the head of the religious department in the Ministry of Justice and Religion, Dr Radoslav Glavaš, a young Franciscan, issued two circulars to officials which set out guidelines for conversion. To convert, Serbs needed to submit a request and obtain a confirmation of honour from a local Ustasha official. The guidelines ruled out the possibility of Serbs converting to the Greek-Catholic faith.¹²² The guidelines contained a chilling proviso: "Special attention should be paid to schoolteachers, priests, tradesmen, artisans and kulaks and to the general Greek-Eastern intelligentsia to ensure that certificates are not granted except in cases when the person's personal honesty can be confirmed. It is an underlying principle of the authorities that certificates should not be presented to such people."¹²³ In November of the same year the Ustasha authorities created a religious department in the State Commissariat for Renewal. It was headed by a militant young Dalmatian Franciscan, Juričev Dionizije who zealously took on his role, recruiting young priests from backwater parishes to go to Serb parishes as "missionaries" and convert the masses.

If newspaper reports were to be believed, the Serb masses joyfully acclaimed the opportunity to return to what was described as the "faith of their forefathers."¹²⁴ According to the Commissar of the Main Ustasha Headquarters, by October of that year, Serbs had converted en masse to Catholicism and wished to send the Poglavnik and the State "an expression of their loyalty and attachment." They asked that all the people of the region be taken into his "all-powerful protection" as they were now joined with their "brother Croats."¹²⁵ Likewise a pamphlet of 1941 declared that those converting to Catholicism were definitely Croats, not Serbs because "Croats are noble, warlike, heroic – they are never shit, the worst of slaves as are Serbs." The pamphlet accused the Serbian Orthodox Church of sowing discord amongst the Croats and cited the example of Mladen Radojčić, a representative of converters from Baranija, who claimed that the decision to convert to Catholicism was not forced by threats or inducements but inspired by a wish not to live like guests in their own homeland.¹²⁶ Yet, from its inception the

campaign of conversion seems to have caused consternation within the Ustasha ranks and friction with the Church. In reaction to the orchestrated campaign of conversion, at its annual conference in November 1941, Catholic bishops had issued a declaration stating that all conversions should fall within the purview of the Catholic Church and that no one but the Church should be able to appoint missionaries. The Church also complained about the attitude of Ustasha officials and soldiers towards those who had converted to Catholicism, pointing out that Ustasha “ruffians” were terrorising, imprisoning and killing the Serb population, even after they had converted to Catholicism. The Grand Župan of Travnik agreed the violent way in which conversions had been implemented had had a detrimental effect on the Serbs. He reported that the Serbs had been “infected” by Communist propaganda whereas before they had been unmoved.¹²⁷

From its inception in the 1930s, the Ustasha Movement was confused about the identity of the Serbs in their midst and could never decide whether they were racially-inferior aliens or long-lost Catholic brethren.¹²⁸ However, such confusion was also a strength since it allowed the Ustashes to alter their propaganda at will. By the end of 1941, the policy of forced conversion and genocide was in chaos. Mass insurrections of the Serb peasantry in the countryside were threatening to overwhelm the State. Thereafter, the Ustashes began a new phase in their relationship with Serbs. The attempt to convert the population to Catholicism had been almost completely abandoned by the middle of 1942 and instead the Ustasha hierarchy proposed the creation of a Croatian Orthodox Church and declared that the Serbs of Bosnia and Croatia had all along been Orthodox Croats, not Serbs or Vlachs.

Although some Ustashes, not to mention radicalised sections of the Catholic Church opposed the very idea of an Orthodox church in Croatia, as the Ustashes pointed out, this idea could be traced back at least as far as Eugen Kvaternik. A new church had to have a constitution and the Ustashes were able to enlist the support of a clique of Serbian and Montenegrin religious thinkers such as Milan Obrknezević and Savić M. Štedimiljia to draft it. A Russian émigré Metropolitan, Germogen, was elected to head the new Croatian Orthodox Church and bishops

were also chosen for other dioceses, such as Sarajevo. A new religious community clearly also had to have its own journal, and in 1944 the Orthodox Croats received a weekly newspaper, *Glas pravoslavlja* (Voice of the Orthodox) and a yearly almanac which lauded the role a gallery of illustrious Orthodox Croats, including Starčević's mother, had played in the battle for independence.¹²⁹ The creation of a Croat Orthodox Church is sometimes interpreted as heralding a new more tolerant attitude on the part of the Ustashas towards the Serbs. In some respects, this is true. The start of 1942 signalled a new direction in Croat politics. Savo Besarević, a university comrade of Pavelić, and other prominent Orthodox personalities were invited to join the regime. They were also allocated seats in the Sabor which was opened again in February 1942 with great pomp and circumstance. The opening of the Sabor itself was meant to suggest that the new direction of the State was more participatory, inclusive and tolerant. This new spirit of inclusiveness also applied to the military where Orthodox youths were allowed to enlist in the labour units of the Domobrans and education where an Orthodox faculty of religion was founded at the University of Zagreb.¹³⁰ State propaganda too, by and large, abandoned its earlier blanket demonisation of the Serbs and began to distinguish between Orthodox Croats and "bandits." By and large, however, this new tolerance was a chimera, useful for the purposes of propaganda and little else. The mass killings of Serbs did not stop, as the events in Kozara proved, although they did lessen somewhat; nor did the concentration camps close. The Ustashas "tolerance" was dictated not by a change of ideology, but by military concerns. With the State in chaos and consumed by insurrection, the German high command demanded that the Ustashas change their policies towards the Serbs. Moreover, in areas controlled by the Partisans and Chetniks, it simply was not possible for the Ustashas to slaughter the local Serb population. However, until the bitter end, prominent Ustashas such as the propaganda chief, Vilko Rieger, believed that genocide was the only solution to the national problem. In other words, the Ustashas' national policy from 1942 onwards was dictated by need not ideology.

Nonetheless, the creation of an Orthodox Church proved of propaganda value to the Ustashas. In his speech to the Sabor in February 1942, announcing the creation of the Croatian Orthodox Church, the Poglavnik asserted that its creation was in harmony with both Croatian national sentiment and Orthodox canon law. Projecting himself as protector of the Orthodox, he denied that the Orthodox were ever forced to convert to the Catholic faith or persecuted; these were simply “fake stories” spread by Croatia’s enemies. At Patriarch Germogen’s enthronement in Zagreb in 1942, the Ustasha official, Dr Jozo Duzmandić, proclaimed that in Croatia “throughout the centuries Orthodox have lived with Muslims and Catholics in love and harmony” and that Croatia loved all Croats, “whether Catholic, Muslim or Orthodox.”¹³¹ This rhetoric was designed to promote the new supposedly moderate Ustasha thinking that the Orthodox, like the Muslims and the Catholics, were all part of one Croatian nation which was religiously tolerant and did not discriminate between members of different faiths. This was contrasted to the “militant aggressive” ideology of Saint Sava used by the Serbian Orthodox Church to create a Great Serb state and which was hostile not only to Europe but also excluded “everyone else insofar as they are not in favour of a Belgrade, Pagan Balkan orientation.”¹³²

Both the Patriarch of Zagreb and the Bishop of Sarajevo, Spiridon Mifka, a schoolfriend of Budak, claimed that the establishment of the Croatian Orthodox Church fulfilled the dearest wishes of the Orthodox in Croatia. They argued, like many nationalist Croatian writers, that the root of the misery of the Orthodox experience lay in Serbia. For decades, Belgrade politicians had used local Serbs to sow discord and they had become a “weapon in the hands of Croatia’s enemies” and, with the creation of the Independent State of Croatia, “Serbs of the first order”; this had been compounded by the actions of the Serbian Orthodox Church which was guilty of a host of sins including ultra-nationalism, aggression against non-Serbs, socialism, atheism and support for the Partisans.¹³³ In their editorials, the leaders of the new Church attacked the Partisans and Chetniks, as the destroyers, not the protectors of the Orthodox and proclaimed that only the Poglavnik and the Ustasha Movement protected their community. If any further

evidence was needed, then chilling stories of the slaughter of Orthodox Croats, loyal to the State, by crazed Chetniks would surely convince the faithful.¹³⁴ However, even those supporters of an autocephalous Orthodox Church could not completely ignore the experience of Serbs, their Churches and especially their priests in the summer of 1941. When the Orthodox churches which could be re-opened were reconsecrated with great ceremony in 1942, the official publication of the Church admitted that churches had indeed been closed in 1941, but they had been shut, they explained, because they were foreign churches or for reasons of security. There was also no denying that “a large number” of Orthodox had been killed in this period. However, they had perished because they had rebelled against the defenceless Croat population and government which had offered them the hand of friendship.¹³⁵ Dušan Marković, a leading thinker of the new Church, called for it not to be used for political purposes as the Serbian Church had been. Orthodox Croats had to remember that they were a minority in the State. In return, as a leading Orthodox supporter of the Ustashas, explained Croat politicians “should have understanding for all the sons of the Croat homeland.” Yet this only served to emphasise the new contradiction: the Ustashas, once the tormentors of the Serbs, had reinvented themselves as protectors of a national group - the Croatian Serbs - who now had ceased to exist.¹³⁶

Ersatz Serbs? The “Rediscovery” of Anti-Semitism

In the Ustasha imagination, Jews and Serbs were joined together in an unholy conspiracy against Croatia. While the Serbs were portrayed as military occupiers and oppressors, the Jews were said to have acted as the economic support of the Serbs, taking advantage of Serbian colonisation to seize all Croatian business and economic life. Jews were “parasites and exploiters” who had been the most loyal citizens of the Yugoslav state.¹³⁷ According to Rudolf Horvat, the former state could be called “Judoslavija,” such a privileged position had the Jews enjoyed in it. Mladen Lorković declared that Jews had historically served the enemies of

Croatia and exploited the Croats in the “most insolent manner” and therefore were, with the Serbs, “a misfortune...which drains healthy forces in this nation” which would have to be cleansed.¹³⁸ However, Jews were seen as double enemies of the Ustashas because they were not only representatives of capitalism and parasitism, but also propagators of Bolshevik ideas, sent to Zagreb by the Serbian rulers to weaken the appeal of nationalism amongst the young.¹³⁹ The spread of dangerous communist ideas had also been facilitated, so the Ustashas claimed, by the marriage of leading Serbian army officers to Jewish women. Imbued with biological concepts of race and the voice of the blood, they argued that mixed marriages between Croats and Jews and Serbs led to the dilution and putrefaction of the race: for them, the virtues of the Croatian race—bravery, honour and gallantry—were threatened by inter-breeding since it would produce “half-breeds” who might then gain influence in public life. Because Croatian heroes of the past had been racially pure Croats, anything else would defile the memory of ancestors.¹⁴⁰ As with Serbs, until the Jewish problem was solved, the Ustashas believed there could not be peace in Croatia.¹⁴¹ United by anti-Croatianism, Jews and Serbs became indistinguishable.

As with the Serbs, propaganda, repression and legal discrimination combined to make Jewish life in the new State utterly impossible. Barely one week after the founding of the State, Jews were warned not to decorate their shop windows with Ustasha symbols or Nazi flags and articles were published in the leading Croatian newspaper declaring that unless the most “drastic” measures were taken against the Jews, they could threaten not only peace but also the Ustashas’ envisaged social revolution.¹⁴² Between April and December 1941, a series of anti-Semitic laws and statutes were introduced which completely disenfranchised Jews and separated them from Croatian society. The Ustasha authorities ordered them to wear yellow armbands bearing Z for “Židov” (Jew) and signs with the Star of David on their backs. Jewish businesses were also ordered to carry such signs; Jews were also banned from trading with non-Jews and were forced into ghettos in major cities with Serbs and subject to the same curfews. By the end of April 1941, Jews could not enter public swimming baths, cafés and restaurants; by the

end of June, Jewish business and property was being taken over by the State and offered for tender to the public; by July, Jews had been barred from taking any part in the cultural and political life of Croatia and were being transported to the newly-established concentration camps at Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška or, else were being handed over for transferral to Nazi camps.¹⁴³

From the beginning, the persecution of Jews was interpreted in terms of social justice. The Ustashas believed that they were creating a new just kind of society, replacing a hedonistic Yugoslav era with a creed of work and sacrifice.¹⁴⁴ Since the Ustasha Movement claimed to be revolutionary, its anti-Semitic propaganda was permeated with anti-bourgeois concepts. First and foremost, the voice of the urban working-classes and peasantry testified to the corruption of Jews in the former Yugoslavia. Newspapers told stories of Croatian working-class towns colonised by Jews in the bad days before pre-1941 Croatia. However, a bright new workers' dawn was coming. One young worker, writing in the pages of the leading Ustasha youth newspaper, recalled that in Yugoslavia, workers were forced to serve capitalism and Jewry, risking their life and health for others' profits. Eventually, the worker had raised his fist and joined the Ustashas' war against capitalism. As a reward, the Ustashas were building colonies of settlements for the worker where he would be master.¹⁴⁵ Such claims served not merely to portray the Ustashas as the friend of the worker but also to vilify Croatian Jews as selfish plutocrats who richly deserved their fate. This rhetoric was repeated endlessly in Ustasha publications. In another newspaper, a wrenching picture of inequality in Banja Luka was constructed. The wretched lives of starving and homeless workers, clerks and artisans, dressed in tatty clothes and rubber boots, looking through the hotel window at "bourgeois dogs" and "vultures" - baptised and non-baptised Jews – living it up with prostitutes and buying up "dozens" of houses was used as a justification to confiscate all Jewish property "stolen" from the State. This, the article announced piously, would be used to help the poorest and to "equalise class differences."¹⁴⁶ The confiscation of Jewish property in other parts of Croatia and its purchase by Croatian citizens was justified in a similar manner, emphasised by the fact that valuable items were often sold at very cheap

prices so the man-on-the-street could afford them.¹⁴⁷ In a State which was officially one of peasants and workers, Jews would also naturally have to engage in manual work. Given the supposedly bourgeois nature of Jews, newspapers could and did argue that pushing local Jewish communities into forced labour was a way of re-educating them in the values of the working-classes. In Vinkovci, a local newspaper pictured members of the Jewish community breaking rubble and sweeping streets. Such work, the commentary opined, would offer them “pay in the future for an honest life.”¹⁴⁸ However, it was also a form of humiliation, the press gleefully printing articles and pictures which illustrated the affluence of their former lives with their current reduced circumstances.¹⁴⁹

Aside from their material affluence, Jews were also to be held to account for the moral decline and corruption in Croatia. Jews were portrayed as an urban phenomenon, completely unknown in the villages. In the cities, it was said, they ran the banks for the Serbs, exploiting Croat peasants and workers, for which work the Serbs rewarded them handsomely. Such obscene wealth brought with it outrageous extravagance, including, according to one writer, villas, servants, mistresses and cabaret shows paid for by toiling Croat workers and peasants.¹⁵⁰ Women also behaved exploitatively. The same writer described how foreign female Jews who sought political refuge from Nazi persecution in Yugoslavia in the 1930s would sit in cafes “eyeing up young men, especially students who they could immediately see were as poor as church mice.” They would seduce such impressionable young men and offer thousands of dinars to them in exchange for marriage and Yugoslav citizenship.¹⁵¹ If some of these youths were saved from these “perverts” the same could not be said of the hundreds of young Croatian girls supposedly raped by Jewish men exposed in the early months of the State. The Ustasha youth organisation itself passed a death sentence against the Jews, calling for the extermination of Jewry because it had promoted dance halls, jazz, parties, floozies and sexual promiscuity.¹⁵²

In a speech in the Sabor, after the introduction of the anti-Semitic laws, the Interior Minister, Andrija Artuković, offered an official articulation of these sentiments, presenting Jews as a people who had turned workers against each

other and, worst of all, impoverished the peasant.¹⁵³ The extent to which Ustasha anti-Semitism reflected popular prejudices is open to debate. Unlike the Serbian question, where Ustasha thinking reflected an important nationalist constituency - and can even be seen as simply the extremist expression of a mainstream national consensus - anti-Semitism does not appear to have played an important role in Croatian national thought.¹⁵⁴ On the contrary, despite the efforts of some Croatian nationalists to interpret national figures like Starčević as an anti-Semite, it appears that since the rise of Croatian nationalism in the nineteenth century, Jews had played a prominent role in its development – the most famous example being the founder of the Pure Party of Rights, Josip Frank.¹⁵⁵ In the Ustasha Movement itself, a number of prominent officials were married to Jewesses and a number of Ustasha activists were themselves scions of respectable Jewish Zagreb families. These included Ivo Korsky, the Ustasha youth ideologue, Ljubomir Krešmir and Vladimir Singer, the hero of Ustasha youth; Eugen Dido Kvaternik was himself of Jewish origin. However, anti-Semitism was not completely absent from Croatia. Catholic organisations, in particular, had a reputation for anti-Semitism since they perceived Jewish politicians, like Frank, as carriers of anti-clerical beliefs.¹⁵⁶ Even in the few months before the creation of the Independent State of Croatia, hostility towards Jews as dangerous usurers and parasites was evident in nationalist leaflets. One leaflet distributed in February 1941 described Jews as the most natural enemies of the Croatian nation, cannibals and Kikes dealing in blood and bread.¹⁵⁷

In the new Croatian state, the Ustashes publicised instances of popular anti-Semitism. In April 1941 a delegation of workers visited the Poglavnik armed with a list of requests, amongst which was the introduction of a Croatian “national” economy and the acquisition of all Jewish property to the profit of workers. In July 1941, the Alliance of Croat Private Employers made the same suggestion.¹⁵⁸ Some Croatians also appear to have supported state anti-Semitism for careerist reasons. A group of doctors in Osijek demanded that Jewish doctors in that town be transferred to concentration camps officially “in the interests of the racial purity of the health service” but possibly also in the interests of their own private

practices since the less competition there was, the more successful their own practices could be.¹⁵⁹ The Catholic Church's theologians and writers, if not its clerical hierarchy, also continued the campaign of anti-Semitism it had pursued in the 1930s. One such writer, Janko Penić, editor of a leading Catholic journal, accused the Jews of being more dangerous than those who had crucified Jesus. He held them responsible, in league with Satan, for Communism and declared that though it might seem unchristian, love had its limits. The anti-Semitic campaign of the Nazis was, he declared, ordained by God. "The movement to free the world from Jewry is a movement for the renewal of human dignity. The Almighty and Wise God himself cares for this defence, this movement."¹⁶⁰

Such opinions were repeated in the letters home of young Catholic workers who had joined the Croatian Legion to fight Bolshevism. For example, Ivan Vadija wrote to his friend Josip Vidovoc that the Soviet Union was a land of hunger and desperation in which everyone "works like a slave and has nothing" while the Jews "do nothing and have everything." In another letter, Stjepan Peterkoc wrote to his friend, Slavko Šek, that the Soviet Union was "a hell created by Jews and Communists" and told his friend to "destroy all and even the slightest attempt at Communism and especially the Jews who derive so much profit from it."¹⁶¹ The Ustashes encouraged such prejudices and the national press made much of the appropriation of Jewish property to be converted into socially-useful housing, soup kitchens and labour offices. For all this, the campaign of anti-Semitism does not appear to have been completely successful and many Croats must have protected their Jewish neighbours. Newspapers routinely complained that the Jewish problem was being solved with insufficient haste. One German travel writer journeying through Bosnia said of the Jews of Mostar: "For the first time, one sees conspicuously lots of Jews uninhibited on the streets. They wear the 'Ž' sign but do it as if it means nothing and apparently feel very secure."¹⁶² Similar complaints were made by ordinary citizens who complained to the Ustasha police that Jews were breaking all regulations. Ozren Kvaternik of Sarajevo complained to the security services in December 1941 that little change seemed to have

occurred in the behaviour of Jews and Gentiles since the introduction of the anti-Semitic laws.¹⁶³

Despite the aggressive emotions which the Ustashes' anti-Semitic campaign represented, their propaganda asserted that it was the hatred of the Jews against the Croats which had provoked this reaction. As fierce anti-Communists, the Ustashes believed, with the Nazis that Jews were not simply the most exploitative capitalists but also the most destructive Communist revolutionaries. In their intellectual treatises on the Jewish enigma, they often repeated Karl Marx's well-known comment that, for the progress of humanity and the building of a socialist Europe, unhistorical and "reactionary" nations such as the Croats, whom he also labelled the "dregs of a nation," would have to be wiped away.¹⁶⁴ Stjepan Radić's 1905 essay on the incompatibility of a mutual Croatian and Jewish life was also reprinted. It served not only to legitimate the Ustashes' policies towards the Jews, but also reminded Croats that the Ustashes were his natural successors insofar as they would protect the Croatian *zadruga* from the claws of the Jewish capital.¹⁶⁵ Some studies, written independently of the Ustashes, also accused the Jews of leading the anti-Nazi protests in Belgrade in March 1941 when Serbs had risen up against their government's signing of the Tripartite Pact with Germany. As a result, the Belgrade Jews escaped and "hundreds of thousands of Serbs [had to] pick up a gun and set off against the invincible German army." Thanks to the ungrateful Jews, who were always treated well in Yugoslavia, the Serbs were experiencing "difficult days."¹⁶⁶

By 1942 the supposed power of the Jews was declared to be destroyed and Croatia could look forward to a future of prosperity and happiness. To remind Croats just how miserable life had been prior to the eradication of the Jews, in May 1942, the Ustashes organised an exhibition at the Strossmayer Pavilion in Zagreb which exposed the history, habits and crimes of the Jews. As such it could be seen as a compilation of all the Ustasha propaganda concerning the Jews. Throughout history, the exhibition argued, the Jews had robbed, abused, exploited and morally corrupted Croatia and the traditional hatred of Croats for Jews illustrated by reference to Andrija II's Golden Bull of 1233, hailed as

Croatia's first anti-Semitic law. This was in contrast to Serbia which had felt a kindred spirit towards the Jews since the rule of Dušan Silni. In Yugoslavia, moreover, King Peter liberated the Jews "from all obstacles which prevented them from ruling the Croats." (Indeed, it cited a Lexicon which claimed to have proof that the Karadjordjevićs were themselves Jewish.) In inter-war Croatia, it was alleged that in Jewish houses, young maids were kept for sexual orgies and then forced to have abortions and that Jewish businessmen controlled the brothels. Comparing Jews to spiders, the exhibition brochure declared that the Jews in Croatia had practised "two thousand years of vice, bloodthirstiness, atheism, the oppression of the weak, poison and the destruction of all customs with which they have come into contact."¹⁶⁷ Naturally, the Ustashas were keen to stress that the material for the exhibition had been supplied by ordinary citizens. According to the brochure, officials at the State Investigative and Propaganda Bureau had been overwhelmed by the volume of books, documents and evidence sent to them; university experts had "given freely of their time and knowledge to put this huge collection in order." The exhibition had been created by the "whole Croatian nation."¹⁶⁸ The press also gave maximum coverage to the exhibition and reported on the enthusiastic attendance of the general public. Cultural and religious journals reviewed it as they would any other exhibition which was surely what the Ustashas desired – the normalisation of anti-Semitism. However impressed they were this did not prevent reviewers from expressing their own personal prejudices. Ivan Raos, a young correspondent for Croatia's premier arts journal, commented that the exhibition was proof that Croatia and the Croats had once and for all settled accounts with the Jews who would nevermore appear on the soil of those they had "robbed and tormented."¹⁶⁹

For all their claims about the historical roots of Croatian anti-Semitism, the fact of the matter is that probably the major influence on the Ustashas' anti-Semitism was thoroughly contemporary: twentieth-century racial biology. Not only was the racial legislation enacted against the Jews identical to the Nazi Nuremberg laws but the Ustashas also appropriated the Nazi idea of an Aryan nation. They argued that the Croats were of Gothic (i.e. German), not Slavic origin. The Gothic

theory of Croatian origins dates back to the end of the nineteenth century when it was popularised by nationalist writers such as Vjekoslav Klaić. Its influence could also be seen in the studies of Pilar and Truhelka in the early twentieth century and Šufflay in the 1920s. In the Independent State of Croatia, the idea that the Croats were of Gothic origin was passionately argued by two clericalist publicists, Cherubin Šegvić and Ivo Guberina.¹⁷⁰ However, prior to 1941 it made no appearance in Ustasha propaganda and in fact contradicted earlier claims that the Croats were a proud Slavic race. (It also incidentally contradicted the claims of some Ustasha supporters, such as nationalist students that Croats were a Dinaric-Slavic race.) The theory of Croatian racial Aryan belonging was almost purely functionalist and it was merely one of a series of racial theories which emerged in the early days of the State, championed by race experts to explain the distinctiveness of Croats from Serbs and to justify the State's anti-Semitic laws. Danijel Uvanović, for example, embraced the idea that the Croats were of Persian origin. Others argued that the Croats were a mixture of Slavic, Gothic and Persian elements; they certainly had no racial connection with Serbs.¹⁷¹ No matter how inchoate these theories were, in 1941, they were useful in providing a scientific basis for the introduction of virulent anti-Semitism into the Croatian body politic.

Whatever the origins of anti-Semitic racial biology, the Ustashes embraced its precepts with alacrity. Not merely intellectual obscurantists propagated the race agenda; official rhetoric was overloaded with the rhetoric of the cult of biological regeneration. In one typical article, the city was likened to an arterial system, the veins of whose population had become contaminated by Jewish and "mongrel-Serb-Cincar-gypsy-Armenian" blood. Urban areas could be renewed only by new blood from the villages, untouched as they were by Jewry. For the new Croatia to be regenerated, Jewish blood would need to be eliminated from the cells of the national organism.¹⁷² According to the "Law Regarding Race Membership" and the "Law Regarding the Defence of Aryan Blood and Honour of the Croatian People" of 1941, anyone who had three or more Jewish or gypsy grandparents could not be considered Aryan. Such people were forbidden to mix with, marry or have extra-marital relations with Aryans, run businesses and retain their own

homes. In addition, any Jewish person who had slavified their surname after 1918 was required to re-adopt the Jewish version.¹⁷³ In cases under dispute, the decision as to whether one was or was not an Aryan was decided by the Ministry of the Interior, headed by Andrija Artuković, who took his advice from the newly-formed Race Political Committee, comprised of a small group of racial experts. However, the latter law contained an exceptional clause. Jews who had made an important contribution to the liberation of Croatia could claim the status of “Honorary Aryan” and thus avoid the humiliation of living in a ghetto and wearing the Star of David, and later the inevitable transferral to a concentration camp. To qualify for honorary Aryan status, Jews had to write to the Jewish Bureau of the Commissariat for Security, headed by Eugen Dido Kvaternik.¹⁷⁴ An edict was also published exempting state employees from wearing the yellow star.¹⁷⁵

This clause was a necessity for Ustashas of Jewish origin, such as Singer and Korsky; it was also necessary in the case of the Jewish wives of leading Gentile Ustashas. Yet it was also seized on by Croatian Jews who had taken an active role in the nationalist struggle. It is not known how many Jews were granted Aryan status but what is clear that a significant number of Jews thought that they were deserving of it and so did many of their non-Jewish compatriots. For example, from 1941 until 1943, friends and neighbours wrote letters requesting Aryan status for Albert Roser and his wife. They were well-respected and had “always collaborated in the Croatian movement and took an active part in the struggle of the HSP in its early years.” In 1943, writing in his own defence, and still seeking Aryan status, Roser claimed that “even as a youth, I joined the Starčević Party of Right and was an active member and, therefore, I always fought for the rights of the Croatian nation and I gathered support for Starčević’s party and held meetings in my flat.” Similarly, Josip Weiss asked permission for Aryan status because he had welcomed the creation of the Independent State of Croatia with joy. This was because, his friend, Marija Kumčić wrote, since his childhood he had been a tireless Frank supporter and had personally met many Ustashas in the days when they were still members of an illegal organisation. Most of these

requests were rejected, but sometimes they did succeed. In September 1941, for example, Leo Sarger gained Aryan status on the basis that he had converted to Catholicism.¹⁷⁶ Yet the ideology and rhetoric prevailing in Croatia was not in their favour. Under the influence of Nazism, specifically, as well as racial biology, the Croats had ceased to be a nation to which one could become acculturated. Instead they had become a biological race which excluded both the alien manners of the Serbs and the impure blood of the Jews.

Best Sons of the Fatherland? Muslims as the "Flower" of Croatianism

If the Serbs were to be excluded culturally from the new Croatia and the Jews racially, then the Muslims of Bosnia were to be embraced both in terms of a supposed shared culture and racial blood brotherhood. The Ustashas believed that in terms of a viable Croatian state, Bosnia was crucial and they were fond of proclaiming that Bosnia was "our heart and soul."¹⁷⁷ According to Ladislav Lašić, without Bosnia, Croatia would be a geopolitical impossibility, like "a person with a head and feet but without a torso."¹⁷⁸ More than this, the Ustashas argued that Bosnia, divided by the River Drina, was the semi-mystical dividing line between two worlds—the civilised West and the primitive East,¹⁷⁹ making Croatia "an oasis of Europe in the Balkans."¹⁸⁰

During the 1930s, nationalist students at the University of Zagreb had issued a number of treatises and declarations claiming the historical right of the Croats to Bosnia on the basis of Croatian-Muslim racial affinity. In fact, one of the principle complaints of Ustasha intellectuals against the Croatian Banovina was that Croatian Muslims had been left stranded outside the boundaries of the Croatian state. Croat nationalists aimed to win the support of Muslims, and especially youths, by supporting their ambition for an autonomous Bosnia in the assumption that it would eventually become the centre of a future unified Great Croatia; they recommended that Catholics travel to Muslim-inhabited areas and

treat them as brothers to win their trust for the coming battle.¹⁸¹ Croat nationalist propaganda predicted that a Croat consciousness would be fostered in Muslims after the creation of an Ustasha state and that the Ustashas would solve the manifold social problems of the Muslims such as illiteracy and unemployment. In short, in a future Croatian state, the Muslims would experience a renaissance.

Despite the fact that the Ustasha movement was overwhelmingly Catholic and Croat, twelve per cent of Ustasha members were Muslims and many prominent Muslims enthusiastically welcomed the creation of the Independent State of Croatia.¹⁸² According to the theatre director, Ahmed Muradbegović, the creation of an independent Croatia opened the door to a fusion of the Muslim East and the Catholic West in which the previously “persecuted and misunderstood qualities” of the Muslims would gain the adulation they deserved. Likewise, the novelist Alija Nametak, joined Croatian heroes such as Petar Svačić, the last medieval Croat king, with Muslim icons such as the bard Safvet Bašagić to greet the “desperately craved hour of final liberation” of all Croats.¹⁸³ Obviously, the proclamations of a few intellectuals did not prove that most Muslims supported the Ustasha Movement or the Independent State of Croatia. The fact that the State press felt compelled only days after the founding of the State to issue a proclamation calling on all Muslims to rally to the new authorities was hardly evidence of confidence. Yet the Ustashas’ extreme rhetoric, which lauded the Muslims as “brother Croats” and called for Muslims to help destroy the Serb criminals who had “spilt so much of your blood” and “defiled your faith and pride and honour,” demonstrated one way in which the Movement aimed to win the support of Muslims. The proclamation ended by declaring Muslims would now be masters in their own home and lands and reflected a number of methods by which the Ustashas aimed to gain and maintain the support of the Muslim population.¹⁸⁴ One of the most powerful propaganda tools in the Ustasha armoury was their ability to play on the difficult past of Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia and instances of conflict between them. Very soon after the creation of the State, articles began to appear reviving Muslim memories of the violence Serbs allegedly perpetrated against them at the beginning of the First World War as

well as the “barbaric and enemy” behaviour of Serbs towards Muslims generally. Muslim supporters of the Ustashas also revived memories of the experience of Muslims beys in Bosnia during the land reforms of the 1920s when “Muslims over night became beggars and our villages were occupied by various foreign would-be liberators (volunteers).” Added to historical memories, the State press chronicled daily the gruesome Serb Partisans and Chetniks’ killing sprees against innocent Muslim civilians who had acted “only in defence of our naked lives.” The Chetniks and Partisans, such newspapers inferred, were simply the latest in a long line of anti-Muslim Serb fanatics. The crucial difference this time was that the Ustashas were here to come to the Muslims’ rescue.¹⁸⁵ Muslims were warned that in Communist Yugoslavia they would be forced to become Serbs, the very people who wanted to destroy them.¹⁸⁶

The Ustashas also contended that Bosnian Muslims supported their political programme because Belgrade had tried to destroy the Muslims nationally, culturally and religiously. The Ustashas argued that since the 1930s Muslims and been joined with Croats in battle for their survival against the Serbs who had attempted to eradicate the Muslim identity first through economic reforms, then, with the aid of teachers imported from Serbia and “native traitors,” through an attempt to prove that Muslims were really Serbs and then through a process of Serbianisation which had failed.¹⁸⁷ Worse than this, the Serb establishment had pursued educational policies which dishonoured Islam and spread a creed of immorality. Moreover, young people had been forced to learn “Serbian” and, as a result, learnt to hate everything that came from Belgrade, welcoming the creation of an independent Croatia where they would be able to go to school based on “proper cultural elevation.”¹⁸⁸ Indeed, so flawed were these crude attempts that, as one young writer explained, “pure and irreproachable” Muslim students and youths had arrived home excitedly to tell their parents about the Poglavnik and his struggle; they immediately enrolled with “fanatical belief” in organisations such as *Narodna uzdanica* (National Dawn) as well as the Ustasha Movement such was their repulsion at the “paganism and evil” of Great Serb propaganda.¹⁸⁹

According to another writer, Muslim youth had fought with the strength of lions for the Ustasha cause in the inter-war period.¹⁹⁰

Like the Catholic clergy, imams and Muslim religious figures enthusiastically rallied to the Ustasha cause. On the first Bajram of the new state, the Mufti of Zagreb held a lecture in the Zagreb Mosque in which he instructed Muslims to work in the spirit of the Poglavnik's teachings and led prayers for the Poglavnik, state and the Ustashas.¹⁹¹ Muftis and Imams, such as Hadži Hafiz Akif Handžić, served in the paramilitary units of the Ustashas and aided in the recruitment of Muslim youth to become "magnificent iron-warriors," Ustashas of the religion of Islam.¹⁹² The first Bajram of liberated Croatia was also an opportunity for Muslim writers to express their hope in moral renewal in Croatia under the Ustashas. Hazim Šabanović, for one, hoped that in the new Croatia all the negative anti-social and immoral manifestations of contemporary life would be swept away mercilessly, be it in "the family, society, public life, cafés, taverns, villages or towns." Likewise, the religious society *Islamijet* directed its ire against those secularised Muslims who had, it believed, abandoned the tenets of their faith and introduced poison to Islamic society in the form of unMuslim practices such as "evening promenades, cafés, parties." Inevitably, much of the hostility towards contemporary life was directed towards Jews. Writers like Omer Zuhrić railed against the Jewish "exploitation of our wives and sisters in Sarajevo factories" in inter-war Yugoslavia. Other writers highlighted the "aggressiveness of Jewish usury" or urged, as a sacred duty of all Muslims, to fight against the "decaying Jewish system of enslavement and profiteering" that sought to destroy belief in Allah, the family and the nobility of humans.¹⁹³

As their proclamation promised, the Ustashas were as good as their word with regards to making the Muslims masters in their own lands. With the ascent of the Ustashas, those Muslims loyal to the Yugoslav state, married to Serbs or who identified as Serbs were dismissed from their positions in the bureaucracy and their jobs taken by "patriotic" Muslims.¹⁹⁴ The demonisation of Muslims who had identified as Serbs in Yugoslavia was held up as the exception which proved the rule.¹⁹⁵ At the same time, many Muslims were appointed to important official and

administrative positions in Bosnia and prominent Muslim politicians such as Džafer Kulenović, Ademaga Mešić entered the government. Muslims, like Hakija Hadžić and Alija Šuljak, already part of the Movement, attained positions of prestige and influence. Muslim Ustashas such as Hadžić and Šuljak proved to be amongst the most loyal and nationally radical of Ustashas, displaying a zeal for violence few Catholic Ustashas could match. This fanaticism was well illustrated in the young Muslims who joined Francetić's Black Legion. The first Legionaries of this élite Ustasha death squad were Muslim youths whose parents had been killed by Serb nationalists or the scions of extreme nationalist families. In the Muslim press, Francetić was lauded as the saviour of the Bosnian Muslims and newspapers in Bosnia talked of the Legion as a brotherhood of unity and love between Muslim and Croat youth and between Francetić and his soldiers. Francetić himself made use of the persecution of Muslims by Serb nationalist bands to gain recruits for his Legion. For example, in March 1942, he called on Muslims to join the Ustasha Movement to expel and destroy the "eternal enemies" of Croatia because "our destroyed homes and our murdered brothers and sisters call us to avenge them...Who brother Ustashas, brother Croats will turn a deaf ear to this call?"¹⁹⁶

In 1942, a group of illustrious nationalist academics produced a huge volume devoted to Bosnia's past. In a style of high-minded objectivity, the authors sought to prove that Bosnia had belonged to the Croats throughout history, except for periods when it had been under foreign occupation. Krunoslav Draganović wrote that "the soul of suffering Bosnia" had been the heart of the ancient Croatian kingdom.¹⁹⁷ Historicist claims were buttressed by scientific findings on race and anthropology. While Filip Lukas restated the foreign nature of Bosnian Serbs as Slavicised Vlachs brought by the Ottomans, Ćiro Truhelka, one of the champions of the Vlach theory, wrote that Muslims, unlike the swarthy Serbs and like their Catholic kith and kin were blue-eyed and blonde-haired.¹⁹⁸ Yet such propaganda could only work if its basic tenets were shared by Muslims themselves. Therefore, Muslim intellectuals had a key role to play. Some, such as Šabanović, invoked Starčević, arguing that Muslims had been able to preserve their "souls, blood and

language” through centuries of occupation because Starčević’s writing had not only awakened the consciousness of Muslims but his admiration for Muslim culture had helped to end centuries of prejudice towards them. He could not help adding that this admiration was in contrast “to the simple-mindedness, malice and cowardice of the Christian tribe whom he appropriately called ‘shit’ and ‘beasts.’”¹⁹⁹ Yet twenty years of Serb hegemony had left its mark on the Muslims of Bosnia, he argued, in the form of scepticism and mistrust. To the Ustashas, the children of Starčević, lay the task of transforming the deceived Muslim masses into fiery Ustasha warriors, awakening in them their true national consciousness. Other Muslim writers pointed to the behaviour of Muslims in the new State. Bosnia was a Muslim land not just because Muslims behaved as good Croats, but as the best Croats: they were the most constructive and enthusiastic element of Ustasha society, fulfilling their national duties and always ready to put on a military uniform and sacrifice themselves; Muslim women were the most liberated, healthy and independent of all women in Croatia: in other words, Muslims made the best Ustashas and, therefore, the best Croats.²⁰⁰

The Ustashas’ ideas about Muslim women would have been familiar to many Yugoslav ideologues. As a modern movement, the Ustashas aimed to remake Muslim women according to a model of emancipated but virtuous womanhood. Like their Catholic sisters, their role models were to be not only princesses, Queens and consorts who had wielded the power behind the throne, but also the independent-minded daughters of Pashas, poetesses and pioneering teachers.²⁰¹ The task of emancipating Muslim women was, many ideologues argued, made more difficult by their centuries of oppression not simply by patriarchal Muslim society, but also in Yugoslavia where, following the collapse of Muslim society after the land reform programme began, honourable Muslim women were forced to work in factories until they dropped and were at constant risk of sexual harassment or exploitation.²⁰² In fact, regime writers painted a doleful impression of malice and injustice perpetrated against Muslim women in Yugoslavia, turned away from factories and offices by the prejudice of Serbophile bosses, shunned by workmates and forced to live a primitive life behind their

veils.²⁰³ In the new Croatia, by contrast, Muslim women were striding into the future with their Catholic sisters, proud of being female Ustashas and members of the same race. "Trousers mix with skirts and shawls with caps but no one cares because we are all conscious we are one people," as one writer put it.²⁰⁴ As with Croatian women, the societal function of Muslim women might have been to raise families but they also had to have a role in public as educators and, since Muslim women were the group with the highest rate of illiteracy in Bosnia, their need for education was urgent.²⁰⁵ Thus the first intake of female Muslim students at Zagreb University was greeted with much self-congratulation on the part of the academic press.²⁰⁶

The image of the Muslim male as a Spartan warrior characterised by heroism and martyrdom was also based on the Ustasha self-image. The manly Muslim Ustasha warrior was explored in short stories, such as Salih Alić's *Smrt ustaše Salke* (The Death of the Ustasha Salko, 1942) and Ismet Zunić's *Pobjednik* (The Victor, 1942). In these stories, a typically gauche youth would be transformed into a merciless warrior upon joining the Movement. In Alić's story, the hero not only joins the Ustashas, but enlists other youths in it, motivated by the injustice of Yugoslavia and the depredations of the Chetniks. Captured by drunk and sadistic Chetniks from Serbia, he is shot and his body mutilated. Like Catholic Ustashas, the enemy shows him no respect or dignity.²⁰⁷ Poems too talked of old Muslim men marching into battle with "manly hearts" to avenge the deaths of their sons.²⁰⁸ The Ustashas also used real stories to spread their message. Ustasha imams spoke with pride of their fallen sons. "I brought them up to be eagles," explained one father of his three sons who had perished as members of the Black Legion. "I honour them and rejoice in them."

In fact, according to some, the Muslim male was the most manly of all Croats owing to the martial ideology of Islam. Mustafa Busulandžić, for example, cited the example of Ebu Musa El-Gassan, the Muslim warrior facing certain defeat at the hands of the Spanish in Granada, who called for his men to die an honourable death rather than surrender like cowards. For Busulandžić, Muslims needed to rediscover their Muslim valour and abandon the Western values which had made

them feminine. In his opinion, Muslims needed to return to valuing death above life – like the Ustasha Movement.²⁰⁹ The Movement was not short of Muslims, who like their Catholic comrades, blew themselves up rather than face capture by the enemy nor indeed soldiers to write grisly eulogies describing in graphic detail the obliterated limbs and entrails of their comrades.²¹⁰

As well as acknowledging similarities and kinship between Croats and Muslims, however, the Ustashas did recognise important differences between the two communities. They saw themselves as not only the heralds of a rebirth in Muslim public life but sought to bring Muslim culture to the Croatian masses to foster Croat-Muslim solidarity. Sometimes, these attempts were risible, such as the plan to build a mosque in the centre of Zagreb. In fact, a mosque was never actually built; the Ustashas simply converted an art pavilion, which had housed the works of the sculptor, Ivan Meštrović. This had the effect of greatly upsetting Croatian art lovers. In addition, few if any Muslims actually lived in Zagreb so there was precious discernable logic behind the plan which was symbolic rather than practical. Nevertheless, the regime was intensely proud of the idea and architects were dispatched to Sarajevo to study the mosque there and improve on it. The Ustashas envisaged an entire cultural complex of libraries, religious schools and museums and the Ustashas boasted that it would be “amongst the most beautiful mosques in the world.”²¹¹ It was opened in May 1942 with great fanfare and one Muslim newspaper proclaimed it a glorious sun-filled temple “invigorating and warming our souls” and binding all Croats more intensely to their native soil so that it was almost a part of them.²¹² What ordinary Croats thought of it is probably unprintable.

Not all attempts at reinvigorating Muslim culture and bringing it to a wider audience were so dismal. The four years of the Independent State of Croatia coincided with the emergence of a new generation of Muslim writers, actors, poets and artists who were able to develop their talents in the State, whatever their political convictions. Most members of this younger generation of fêted artists and writers were, for the most part, young, nationalist and male. Writers such as Alija Nametak, Ismet Zunić, Salih Alić and Abduhran Nametak and others whose

work appeared in Ustasha literary journals and, most usually, at Sarajevo's state theatre, represented for Vladimir Jurčić heralds of the "Croatian Bosnian spirit." For Salih Alić, in the Independent State of Croatia, young Muslims, freed from Serb hegemony were at last able to find their voices.²¹³ However, there was also a group of independent-minded Muslim writers who were able to cut their literary and artistic teeth too. Enver Čolaković was just one of a number of writers who first found acclaim and respect in the Independent State of Croatia.²¹⁴ Ahmed Muradbegović's Sarajevo State Theatre itself, with its repertoire of old and new Bosnian artists, was another example of what the Ustashes termed the Muslim cultural revival, rescued from the clutches of corrupt and malicious Serb control which had imposed repertoires on it designed to encourage disharmony between Croats and Muslims.²¹⁵ When the Sarajevo State Theatre toured Zagreb in 1943, Ustasha ideologues were ecstatic. Dušan Žanko, Director of the National State Theatre in Zagreb, proclaimed the tour represented the meeting of the "Croatian East and the Croatian West, two cultural fires in which one soul and one force lives."²¹⁶ A revived Bosnian Muslim society also obviously needed its own legends and heroes as well as its villains. These included such icons as the writer, Mehmed Dželaludin Kurt, the nineteenth-century political activist, Safvetbeg Bašagić and the Zagreb Muslim student, Salih Šahinagačić, who had been killed by troops of Ban Rauch as he protested in the streets of Zagreb against Austro-Hungarian rule but, who as far as the State media was concerned, had died at the hands of "unrestrained mercenary Serb bands."²¹⁷ There was also excited talk of making Banja Luka the capital of Croatia since Bosnia was "the synthetic essence of our past," united in "one terrible spasm, in a trembling search for wholeness and roundness...a synthesis of our whole national life."²¹⁸

Needless to say, not all Muslim supporters of the regime were impressed. In particular, some objected to the popular personification in literature and writing of Bosnia as a wild, Eastern and exotic land populated by young brave and bloody men and beautiful mysterious women or, to use Truhelka's words a "deserted, wild, unrefined land of rebellion and bloodthirsty people" only civilised by the Habsburgs.²¹⁹ Ismet Zunić, for example, complained about the relative anonymity

of Muslim writers which he ascribed to a stereotyped image of Bosnia as an “exotic and strange land.” Such “imaginary exoticism” meant that only Muslim writers who acceded to such a stereotype could get published. This was not an accurate picture of Muslims. On the contrary, it was in the martial and heroic culture of Islam with its creed of socialism and not the stories of Karl May or today’s indolent Muslim literary journals that Croats could better understand their Bosnian Muslim brothers.²²⁰

Ultimately, Ustasha propaganda to disarm the Muslims did not work and what many of them increasingly desired was an autonomous Bosnia. By 1943, Muslims were estranged to an unprecedented extent from the Ustasha regime and their newspapers began to talk of a special Bosnian rather than Croatian nation. When the Grand Mufti of Palestine, who had been recruited by the Nazis to rally Muslims to join its SS formations, visited Croatia, he was welcomed by the cream of Bosnian Muslim society including the mufti of the Black Legion, Akif Handžić, and the young Zagreb University professor, Ibrahim Rudžić. The Mufti was warmly received in Sarajevo; he compared the Muslims’ struggle against the Serbs and Jews to the fight of Muslims in Palestine against the Jews. His efforts were not in vain; Muslim men applied to join the SS in large numbers. The Muslim press was especially proud that its men were the first non-Germans to serve in the world’s “most élite unit.”²²¹ Privately, the Ustashas were furious. The unit created out of this conscription drive, the SS Handžar, although stationed in Bosnia, had no connection to them or the State and it was under the command of the Germans. Eventually it grew to be 17,000 men strong.²²² It was an expression of the increasing independence of Muslims and their distance from the regime. The Muslims, it seems, were aware that with precious few Jews and Serbs left to destroy, the Muslim community might be next.

CONCLUSION

The national question lay at the heart of the Ustasha ideology and at the centre of the national question lay the Serbian problem. Indeed, one could argue that the Ustashes largely defined their ideology on the basis of their animosity towards the Serbs. This hatred, based as much upon folklore and popular prejudice as bitter experiences in Yugoslavia, resulted in the development of a form of ultra-nationalism which was negative in the extreme since it was predicated not on the absolute and positive qualities of the Croatian nation and people, but rather on a visceral hatred and loathing of others. The Ustashes believed that with the destruction of the Serbs – with their extermination and cleansing from Croatia – the Croatian nation would be revived and enter a golden age of development, becoming an Adriatic Athens or Sparta. In fact, the genocide of the Serbs was its Achilles' heel and ultimately resulted in the destruction of the State since not only did it make an enemy of the Serb population but it also alienated many Muslims and Croats. When the Ustashes realised the futility and impossibility of the endeavour to annihilate the Serb population, they affected an insincere and unsuccessful rapprochement. However, by that time it was far too late.

Although there was some history of bad blood between Serbs and Croats and indeed some residual support and sympathy for the anti-Serb propaganda, their war against the Jews could claim no such tradition and a Croatia cleansed of Jews was restricted to the fantasies of the most extreme of nationalists – in particular the activists of Govedić's Croatian National Socialist Workers' Party and the intellectual youths of Stjepan Buć's *Nezavisnost*. Even the most zealous Croat racial ethnographer had rarely, if ever, raised the spectre of anti-Semitism. In the Ustasha Movement itself, anti-Semitism had played a marginal role until the late 1930s. The letters home of legionary soldiers displayed a commitment to anti-Semitism, but it was couched in language borrowed root and branch from the Nazis. Given the enthusiasm with which the media embraced Nazi racial biology and the zeal with which some members of the public took advantage of the confiscation of Jewish property, it might seem that there was support for anti-

Semitism. Yet this must be contrasted with the testimonies of ordinary Croats on behalf of their Jewish neighbours and friends. After an initial upsurge in anti-Semitic violence, the war against the Jews became increasingly unpopular.

The Ustashas' attempt to embrace the Muslims as integral Croats possessed historical precedents. The Ustashas envisaged a rebirth of Muslim culture and society in new Croatia which was initially appealing to many Muslims who joined the Ustasha Movement with enthusiasm. Although under the Ustasha regime Muslims did achieve high office and their artists and scientists achieved fame, the Muslims as a community did not achieve the political autonomy (as opposed to cultural independence) they desired. The rewards which accompanied the exclusion of Serbs from Croatian society were short-lived. Not only did the Muslim community bear the brunt of Serb vengeance directed at supporters of the Ustasha regime, but they also became increasingly aware that after the Serbian problem had been solved they themselves might be the next enemy in the Ustasha firing line. For all the talk of the blood brotherhood and shared fate of Catholic Croats and Muslim Croats, Muslims, generally, looked on the Ustashas with a certain wariness as time progressed.

The main problem for the Ustashas' national policy and, therefore, for their propaganda was its contradictory nature. Some Serbs the Ustashas viewed as settlers, immigrants, Vlachs and gypsies; others Great Serb colonists and some simply Orthodox Croats. But which were they? Similarly, some Muslims identified strongly as Serbs: were they too the "flower" of the Croatian nation? While Jews were to be cleansed from the Croatian body politic, some were to be saved on account of their deeds for the Croatian nation. Thus, were Jews a religious or racial community or were they both or neither? Such questions were never answered. No doubt the Ustashas believed they did not have to be. However, because the Ustashas never resolved the national question, they were never likely to resolve the other ideological questions that consumed them.

NOTES

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- ¹ Kvaternik (1955), 69.
- ² See, for example, Krestić (1997), Djilas (1996), 107, n. 3, 207.
- ³ The most comprehensive study of Starčević in English and his attitude towards the Serbs is contained in Spalatin (1975), 122-146.
- ⁴ Starčević (1876), 29., Gross (1971), 25-33.
- ⁵ Starčević (1870), 242, Spalatin (1975), 127 ..
- ⁶ Starčević (1936), 22-32.
- ⁷ Regarding the ideological development of the Pure Party of Right, see, for example, Gross, (1973), esp. 271-378.
- ⁸ See, for example, *Hrvatsko pravo*, 14 February 1902, *Hrvatsko pravo*, 31 January 1902.
- ⁹ Truhelka (1942 a), 128-39. For a very unconvincing contemporary defence of the Vlach theory of Serbian origins in Bosnia, see Malcolm (1994), 73-79, 267, n. 20.
- ¹⁰ *Hrvatsko pravo*, 1 September 1902, *Hrvatsko pravo*, 2 September 1902. Thus they do not deserve the title of “large-scale demonstrations” as afforded them by Nicholas Miller. There was nothing remotely democratic or civic about them. Miller (1997), 53.
- ¹¹ Miller (1997) provides a detailed account of Serb society and political life in Croatia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. See 73-137.
- ¹² *Hrvatsko pravo*, 17 August 1908, *Hrvatsko pravo*, 11 August 1908, *Hrvatsko pravo*, 7 August 1908. See also Gross (1973), 360-67.
- ¹³ Gross (1973), 358.
- ¹⁴ Gross (1973), 364, *Hrvatski branik*, 27 September 1941.
- ¹⁵ Djilas (1991), 33-4, Banac (1984), 98-102, Šidak (1968), 211-237.
- ¹⁶ Bataković (1995), 88-91, Banac (1984), 367.
- ¹⁷ *Südland* (a 1918), 337-350. See also *Südland* (b 1918).
- ¹⁸ Klaić (1885), Radić (1908), Petringensis (1898), Bašagić (1931).
- ¹⁹ Cited in Woodhouse and Woodhouse (1920), 127.
- ²⁰ Šufflay (1928), 29, 41. On Šufflay, see also Banac (1984), 266-69.
- ²¹ Lukas (1931), 122, Lukas (1944). In the introduction (1944, 1-5), Lukas gives an account of his own early Yugoslav leanings which earned him dismissal from his teaching post at a naval academy in Dubrovnik when he announced his support for the Rijeka Resolution of 1905.
- ²² Haler (1929), 129-32, Radica (1929), 441.
- ²³ Radeka (1936), 700-3.
- ²⁴ See, for example, Wendel (1920), 333-36, Tomandl, (1920), 336-40. According to the census of 1921, there were 513,472 Germans, 472,409 Hungarians and 78,000 Jews, 24,000 of whom lived in Croatia. See Banac (1984), 55, Kečkemet (1971), 167.

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- ²⁵ Friedenreich (1979), 172-89.
- ²⁶ Kajon (1922), 264-270, Popović (1996), 29-36.
- ²⁷ See, for example, Radošević (1935), 619, 621.
- ²⁸ See, for example, Gajić (1938), 5.
- ²⁹ One example of dissent against the rising tide of anti-Semitism can be found in Ć. (1938), 384. The edition in which this article appeared was subsequently banned.
- ³⁰ Žutić (1991), 252-72. For the promotion of anti-Semitism in one Belgrade newspaper, see M.B. (1937) 488-92.
- ³¹ Ć., (1923), 441. Regarding the position of the Muslim community in inter-war Yugoslavia, see Friedman, (1996), 89-109.
- ³² Muradbegović (1922), 3-9, Muradbegović, (1921), 107-16.
- ³³ Friedman (1996), 89-109, Malcolm (1994), 167.
- ³⁴ Purivatra (1969), 132-218.
- ³⁵ Friedman (1997), 89-109.
- ³⁶ See, for example, Mehmed Spaho (1923), 505-6.
- ³⁷ Friedman (1997), 89-109.
- ³⁸ One of the best accounts of Radić's life and politics is provided in Biondich (2000).
- ³⁹ Biondich (2000), vii-xi, 245-254.
- ⁴⁰ Fischer-Galati (1967), 103-114.
- ⁴¹ Boban (1961), 243-246.
- ⁴² *Hrvatski dnevnik*, 29 August 1939.
- ⁴³ Jovanović's views on the national question in Yugoslavia are explained in *Novosti*, 9 December 1939. See also Boban (1974), 143-284.
- ⁴⁴ Boban (1964), 266-73, *Novosti*, 19 December 1939, Boban (1974) 143-284 .
- ⁴⁵ Lorković (1939), 159-65.
- ⁴⁶ Draganović (1937), 7-8, 69.
- ⁴⁷ *Rakovica*, 1: 1, 1936.
- ⁴⁸ *Rakovica*, 1: 1, 1936.
- ⁴⁹ Buć (1936), Lukas (1937) and Došen (1937).
- ⁵⁰ Kolar-Dimitrijević (1976), 221-32, Boban (1961), 224-64, Boban (1974), 143-284.
- ⁵¹ *Novosti*, 1 December 1939. As early as 1920 medical students at the University of Zagreb were calling for a numerus clausus for all Croatian Jews and the expulsion from faculty of all foreign Jews. Sekelj (1988), 162, Rajčević (1980), 123, n. 530. .
- ⁵² *Nezavisnost*, 12 January 1939, *Mlada Hrvatska*, 1 November 1939.
- ⁵³ *Mlada Hrvatska*, 1 November 1936, *Mlada Hrvatska*, 17 November 1936.
- ⁵⁴ Matijević (1934), 4, 31, Anonymous (1934), 7.
- ⁵⁵ Krizman (1980), n.42, 76-77.

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- ⁵⁶ Krizman (1980), n.42, 76-77.
- ⁵⁷ Kuper (1981), 57-120.
- ⁵⁸ See, for example, *Narodne novine*, 18 April 1941, *Narodne novine*, 25 April 1941, MPB/NDH/31/ 218/I-81-120/119/1941, GRP/NDH/27/237//1107/41, GRP/NDH/27/237/104, *Narodni novine*, 19 July 1941, *Novi list*, 6 June 1941, *Hrvatska krajina*, 42 June 1941.
- ⁵⁹ *Hrvatski narod*, 17 May 1941, *Hrvatska krajina*, 29 April 1941, *Hrvatska krajina*, 23 April 1941.
- ⁶⁰ *Hrvatski narod*, 10 July 1941, *Hrvatski narod*, 10 May 1941.
- ⁶¹ *Narodne novine*, 17 April 1941, See also Djilas (1995), 116-17.
- ⁶² *Narodne novine*, 17 April 1941, *Narodne novine*, 26 November 1941, *Narodne novine*, 17 May 1941, UNS/NDH/12/248/47812/42/521/1942.
- ⁶³ *Novi list*, 28 June 1941, *Novi list*, 12 June 1941.
- ⁶⁴ *Hrvatski narod*, 20 April 1941, *Hrvatski narod*, 25 April 1941.
- ⁶⁵ *Hrvatska krajina*, 20 April 1941, *Hrvatska krajina*, 24 April 1941.
- ⁶⁶ *Hrvatska krajina*, 6 June 1941, *Hrvatska krajina*, 27 May 1941.
- ⁶⁷ *Hrvatski narod*, 29 April 1941.
- ⁶⁸ *Hrvatska krajina*, 24 October 1941, *Hrvatska krajina*, 29 April 1941.
- ⁶⁹ UNS/NDH/1/248/VT8/1942.
- ⁷⁰ GRP/NDH/27/237/1107/41.
- ⁷¹ GRP/NDH/27/237/429/42.
- ⁷² *Hrvatski narod*, 6 June 1941.
- ⁷³ *Hrvatska krajina*, 30 May 1941, *Hrvatska krajina*, 24 April 1941.
- ⁷⁴ *Ustaša*, 3 July 1941.
- ⁷⁵ *Hrvatska krajina*, 1 June 1941.
- ⁷⁶ *Novi list*, 4 August 1941.
- ⁷⁷ Truhelka (1942 c), 136, Truhelka, (1941), 29-43, Truhelka (1942 b), 27-40.
- ⁷⁸ Balić (1942), 7-12.
- ⁷⁹ Šišul (1942), Oršanić (1942). By contrast, Jurišić (1943) did not especially select the anti-Serb writings of Starčević, although in the editorial note, he did attempt to synthesise the teachings of Starčević, Pavelić and the Ustashas, 522-37.
- ⁸⁰ Murvar 1-2 (1941).
- ⁸¹ Murvar, 1 (1941), 62, Murvar (1942 b), 86.
- ⁸² Murvar (1942 b), 84-5.
- ⁸³ Kuper (1991), 57-77.
- ⁸⁴ Jelić-Butić (1977), 163-78, Djilas (1996), 118-21.
- ⁸⁵ Dedijer (1992), 165-71, Mirković (1996), 80.
- ⁸⁶ Durham (1928), 153-79.

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- ⁸⁷ Alcock (2000), 381-407. For a general discussion of the symbolic and communicative aspects of genocide, see Lincoln (1991), 138-46.
- ⁸⁸ Regarding these, see Dedijer and Miletić (1990).
- ⁸⁹ See Bogosavljević (1995), xvi.
- ⁹⁰ Bataković (1996), 105-6.
- ⁹¹ *Nova Hrvatska*, 23 July 1942.
- ⁹² *Nova Hrvatska*, 23 July 1942.
- ⁹³ Lorković (1941), 9-40, *Hrvatski narod*, 14 January 1945.
- ⁹⁴ *Spremnost*, 14 March 1943. Jelačić Square refers to the failed uprising of Croatian Domobrans on 5 December 1918 which was crushed by Croatian sailors loyal to the new Yugoslav Kingdom and in which a few bystanders were killed. This is discussed more fully in Chapter 4.
- ⁹⁵ *Hrvatski narod*, 26 August 1942.
- ⁹⁶ *Osvit*, 10 May 1942.
- ⁹⁷ There were at the least a dozen concentration camps. See Miletić (1986), 15-44.
- ⁹⁸ *Hrvatski narod*, 23 August 1941.
- ⁹⁹ Miletić (1986), 15-44.
- ¹⁰⁰ The numbers killed in Jasenovac and even the nature of the camp has been the subject of much controversy in recent years. Some Croatian writers argue that few inmates died at Jasenovac and that Jasenovac was not a concentration camp. One of the most extreme arguments is presented in Pečarić (1998). Compare this with Miletić (1998), 18-26 which argues that the figure of 100,000 deaths at Jasenovac may be too low.
- ¹⁰¹ GRP/NDH/30/237/2088/42, GRP/NDH/30/237/12064/42.
- ¹⁰² *Spremnost*, 8 February 1942.
- ¹⁰³ *Hrvatski narod*, 9 September 1942.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Hrvatski narod*, 4 February 1945.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Hrvatski vojnik*, 15 March 1945.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Hrvatski branik*, 23 August 1941, *Hrvatska krajina*, 29 April 1941, *Hrvatski narod*, 9 May 1941, *Hrvatski narod*, 10 May 1941, *Hrvatski narod*, 5 May 1941.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Hrvatska krajina*, 9 July 1941.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Hrvatska rieč*, 24 January 1942.
- ¹⁰⁹ Kovačić (1942).
- ¹¹⁰ Starčević (1943), 7-31.
- ¹¹¹ GRP/NDH/29/237.
- ¹¹² *Katolički tjednik*, 18 May 1941.
- ¹¹³ *Ustaša*, 19 July 1941.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ustaša*, 7 September 1941.
- ¹¹⁵ *Ustaša*, 17 August 1941, *Ustaša*, 7 July 1941.

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- ¹¹⁶ Bzik (1942 c), 10-15.
- ¹¹⁷ *Spremnost*, 1 March 1942, *Spremnost*, 8 April 1942.
- ¹¹⁸ MPB/NDH/119/41, *Hrvatski narod*, 9 May 1941,
- ¹¹⁹ *Narodne novine*, 5 May 1941.
- ¹²⁰ *Narodne novine*, 27 May 1941.
- ¹²¹ *Katolički list*, 11 June 1941.
- ¹²² See, for example, *Hrvatska krajina*, 25 June 1941, *Hrvatski narod*, 27 June 1941.
- ¹²³ MPB/NDH/42678/41, MPB/NDH/46468/41.
- ¹²⁴ *Hrvatski narod*, 20 November 1941, *Hrvatski narod*, 19 November 1941.
- ¹²⁵ HIS/NDH/2542-3000/6493/41.
- ¹²⁶ Anonymous (1941 b), 11, 45-54.
- ¹²⁷ GRP/NDH/12/237/17, DRP/VO/NDH/8646-1941/603/41, *Katolički tjednik*, 18 May 1941.
- ¹²⁸ *Ustaška mladež*, 30 December 1941.
- ¹²⁹ *Pravoslavni kalendar za 1943 godine*, 85-88.
- ¹³⁰ *Glas pravoslavlja*, 15 May 1944, *Glas pravoslavlja*, Easter 1944.
- ¹³¹ *Glas pravoslavlja*, Easter 1944, *Pravoslavni kalendar za 1943 godine*, 79-84.
- ¹³² *Glas pravoslavlja*, 15 May 1944.
- ¹³³ *Spremnost*, 21 February 1942, *Spremnost*, 25 May 1942, *Štemdilija*, (1943 a), 95-103 and (1943 b), 50.
- ¹³⁴ *Glas pravoslavlja*, 1 August 1944, *Glas pravoslavlja*, Easter 1944.
- ¹³⁵ *Glas pravoslavlja*, 1 August 1944.
- ¹³⁶ *Glas pravoslavlja*, 15 May 1944, *Spremnost*, 13 February 1944.
- ¹³⁷ Balić (1942), 7.
- ¹³⁸ *Hrvatska krajina*, 26 June 1941, *Hrvatski narod*, 28 July 1941.
- ¹³⁹ Bogdan (1942), 24.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Nova Hrvatska*, 24 March 1943.
- ¹⁴¹ *Hrvatski narod*, 17 April 1941. The most comprehensive studies of the Jewish experience in the Independent State of Croatia are to be found in three regional studies of the Yugoslav Jewish community: Kečkemet (1971), 167-208, Stulli (1989), 83-93 and Pinto (1987), 167-89 and in one general study, Romano (1980).
- ¹⁴² *Hrvatski narod*, 17 April 1941, *Hrvatski narod*, 20 April 1941.
- ¹⁴³ See, for example, *Hrvatski narod*, 27 June 1941, *Hrvatski narod*, 21 April 1941, *Hrvatski narod*, 28 June 1941, *Novi list*, 6 June 1941, *Narodne novine*, 4 June 1941.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Hrvatski narod*, 25 August 1942.
- ¹⁴⁵ *Ustaška mladež*, 9 December 1941.
- ¹⁴⁶ *Hrvatska krajina*, 18 May 1941.
- ¹⁴⁷ *Nova Hrvatska*, 18 March 1942.

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- ¹⁴⁸ *Hrvatski branik*, 10 May 1941.
- ¹⁴⁹ *Hrvatski narod*, 28 May 1942.
- ¹⁵⁰ Anonymous (1942 a), 2.
- ¹⁵¹ Anonymous (1942 a), 12.
- ¹⁵² *Ustaška mladež*, 9 December 1941.
- ¹⁵³ *Narodne novine*, 25 February 1942.
- ¹⁵⁴ However, some historians argue that Croatia tended more towards anti-Semitism than Serbia. See, for example, Pass Friedenreich (1979), 53.
- ¹⁵⁵ *Hrvatsko pravo*, 27 October 1908.
- ¹⁵⁶ *Hrvatsvo*, 25 May 1908.
- ¹⁵⁷ Cited in St Gabrijel (1941), 2.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Hrvatski narod*, 29 April 1941, *Novi list*, 1 July 1941.
- ¹⁵⁹ Cited in Romano (1980), 93-94.
- ¹⁶⁰ *Katolički tjednik*, 25 May 1941.
- ¹⁶¹ *Hrvatski radnik za godine 1943*, 231-2, *Hrvatski radnik za godine 1943*, 233.
- ¹⁶² Ginsel (1942), 46-59.
- ¹⁶³ MUP/NDH/RSZO/1941/72/41.
- ¹⁶⁴ Rieger (1942), 229-33.
- ¹⁶⁵ *Nova Hrvatska*, 21 March 1943, *Hrvatski narod*, 21 August 1942.
- ¹⁶⁶ *Hrvatski branik*, 10 May 1941, Anonymous (1942 a), 12.
- ¹⁶⁷ *Židovi: izložba o razvoju židovstva i njihovog rušilačkog rada u Hrvatskoj prije 10.iv.41 – rješenje židovskog pitanja u NDH* (1942), 5-21.
- ¹⁶⁸ *Židovi* (1942), 5.
- ¹⁶⁹ Raos (1942), 339, *Nova Hrvatska*, 3 May 1942.
- ¹⁷⁰ Guberina (1942) 1942, 77-81, Šegvić (1941), esp., 51-56.
- ¹⁷¹ *Hrvatski narod*, 24 October 1942.
- ¹⁷² *Hrvatski branik*, 10 May 1941.
- ¹⁷³ *Narodne novine*, 30 April 1941.
- ¹⁷⁴ Regarding Aryanism in the Ustasha Movement, see Reinhartz (1982), 19-25.
- ¹⁷⁵ *Hrvatski narod*, 28 May 1941.
- ¹⁷⁶ MUP/NDH/ORP/1546-1345/1943/2737, MUP/NDH/RSŽO/1942/35-76/6121/39/850, MUP/NDH/RSŽO/1942/35-76/612/1134, MUP/NDH/RSŽO/35-76/6121/10225, MUP/NDH/RSŽO/1942/35-76/6121/5947.
- ¹⁷⁷ *Hrvatska krajina*, 25 June 1941.
- ¹⁷⁸ Vlašić (1943), 137.
- ¹⁷⁹ *Hrvatski narod*, 1 January 1944.
- ¹⁸⁰ Truhelka (1942 c), 30.

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- ¹⁸¹ *Plava revija*, 1: 1, September 1940, 27, *Plava revija*, 1: 2, October 1940, 41-4. See also Jelić-Butić (1971), 663-70 and Konjević (1970), 671-82.
- ¹⁸² Friedman (1997).
- ¹⁸³ *Hrvatski narod*, 29 April 1941, *Novi behar*, 14, 15 May 1941.
- ¹⁸⁴ *Hrvatska krajina*, 20 April 1941.
- ¹⁸⁵ *Hrvatski narod*, 13 February 1943, *Spremnost*, 23 May 1943, *Ustaša*, 27 January 1945, *Nova doba*, 10 October 1942, *Osvit*, 10 May 1942, *Hrvatski narod*, 13 April 1941.
- ¹⁸⁶ *Hrvatski Narod*, 1 January 1944.
- ¹⁸⁷ *Hrvatska rieč*, 10 April 1945.
- ¹⁸⁸ *Novi behar*, 14: 2-3, June-July 1941.
- ¹⁸⁹ *Osvit*, 10 April 1942, *Hrvatska rieč*, 10 April 1945.
- ¹⁹⁰ *Osvit*, 10 April 1942.
- ¹⁹¹ *Nova Hrvatska*, 28 December 1941.
- ¹⁹² *Osvit*, 14 May 1942.
- ¹⁹³ *Hrvatska krajina*, 24 October 1941, *Nova doba*, 18 December 1942, *Novi behar*, 14: 2-3, June-July 1941, *Novi behar*, 14: 4, August 1941.
- ¹⁹⁴ See, for example, *Hrvatska krajina*, 25 June 1941. Derviš Tafro was dismissed because he was "an exponent of Serb rule" in Bosnia.
- ¹⁹⁵ Truhelka (1942 c), 138, Suljemanpašić (1942), 155-61.
- ¹⁹⁶ *Nova Hrvatska*, 3 April 1943, *Osvit*, 29 March 1942, *Osvit*, 4 April 1943.
- ¹⁹⁷ Draganović (1942), v-vii.
- ¹⁹⁸ Truhelka (1942 b), 11-26, Lukas (1942), 39-72.
- ¹⁹⁹ *Novi behar*, 14: 2-3, June-July 1941, 49-51 and *Novi behar*, 14: 1-2, 15 May 1941, 3-6.
- ²⁰⁰ Hadžijahić (1942), 27-33, Hadžijahić (1941), 245-54.
- ²⁰¹ See, for example, Hadžijahić (1941), 245-54.
- ²⁰² *Ustaška mladež*, Easter 1942, *Alma mater Croatica*, January-April 1944, 7: 5-8, 195-6.
- ²⁰³ *Ustaška mladež*, Easter 1942.
- ²⁰⁴ *Ustaška mladež*, Easter 1942.
- ²⁰⁵ *Osvit*, 22 February 1942.
- ²⁰⁶ *Alma mater Croatica*, January-April 1944, 7: 5-8.
- ²⁰⁷ Alić (1942), 302-6.
- ²⁰⁸ *Hrvatski narod*, 20 January 1945, *Hrvatska krv*, January 1945, 3.
- ²⁰⁹ *Novi behar*, 16: 19, 1 October 1944, 293-96, *El-Hidaje*, 22 September 1941.
- ²¹⁰ *Osvit*, 19 October 1942.
- ²¹¹ *Nova Hrvatska*, 10 April 1942.
- ²¹² *Osvit*, 24 May 1942.
- ²¹³ Alić (1943), 342, Jurčić (1941-42), 229-32.

²¹⁴ *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 20: 2, 1 July 1943, 294.

²¹⁵ *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 11: 1941-1942, 25 October 1942, 229-32, *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 15-16: 2, 1 April 1943, 227-28, *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 2: 2, 1 January 1943, 145-48.

²¹⁶ *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 20: 2, 1 July 1943, 281-82.

²¹⁷ See, for example, *Nova Hrvatska*, 18 February 1942, *Hrvatski narod*, 14 January 1945.

²¹⁸ Murvar, (1942 a), 21-6.

²¹⁹ See, for example, Jurčić (1943 a), 343-44, Klarić (1942 a), 304, Alfrević (1943), 83 and Truhelka (1942 c), 30, 101.

²²⁰ *Hrvatski narod*, 10 April 1943.

²²¹ *Osvit*, 25 October 1942.

²²² See Redžić (1987), 81-102.

The Revolutionary Commissars of the New Generation: Ustasha Youth and their Mythologies of Radicalism

“We were so proud of our resolve despite our youth and inexperience that the idea that God perhaps could be against us would have seemed absurd.” Thus one German woman remembered her childhood in the female branch of the Hitler Youth movement, the Bund of German Maidens.¹ She was not alone in this view. Historians have also written about the sense of superiority, arrogance and invincibility which youth developed as a result of the extraordinary power and influence they managed to have in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany and the fanatical loyalty some of them displayed to the State in place of familial loyalty.² At the same time, such writers have been quick to point out that the rebelliousness, radicalism and dynamism of youth which had been so effectively marshalled by regimes in Italy and Germany could also be turned against them when they disappointed their youth wing. Hitler Youth, quite against Hitler’s wishes, embraced the “chaos of the soul” which Expressionism represented and held regular sports events with Jewish youth; Fascist youth grew increasingly frustrated with Mussolini’s failure to create a corporate, socially equal society.

While all utopian political and social systems have attempted to appeal to the masses by invoking the culture of newness, novelty and rebirth, perhaps only fascism actually saw itself as a movement of youth. For fascists, their ideology represented a rebellion not just against bourgeois society and the values which it held dear but also a revolt against the values of their parents. Fascism was not only an ideology which placed daring, speed and audaciousness at the heart of its ideology, but its membership was also overwhelmingly young. A dynamic movement of action, it called for eternal revolution, and offered the chance to create a new utopian society, pure and unsullied by the compromises of the past. Since the image of youth was so intrinsic to fascism and National Socialism,

fascists inevitably saw the socialisation of the young as vital for the survival of the State. In short, youth was the vanguard of the fascist revolution.³

Herbert W. Schneider, writing about Fascist Italy in the late 1920s, believed that youth's attraction to fascism could be explained, at least in part, by its religious qualities. Fascism, he wrote, represented a religious revival and as such had given to thousands of Italian youth an ideal for which they could die.⁴ It is difficult to know how true such a dramatic statement was yet Schneider was certainly right to highlight the key role youth played in the seizure, consolidation and development of fascist rule. Nowhere was this perhaps more true than in universities where students seemed to rally to extremist messages of both the right and the left with alarming alacrity. In the inter-war period, throughout Europe, universities were in a state of crisis. With the end of the First World War in 1918, soldiers had gone straight from the battlefields of defeat to the halls of learning. With many European countries economically ruined and socially shattered by the trauma of 1914-1918, there were few scholarships to be had. At the same time, governments were encouraging the opening of education to the toiling masses. In countries such as Romania, post-war universities saw a massive influx of youth from the countryside into the big city. Most students were hungry, living at subsistence level and forced to endure lectures and learning in overcrowded and crumbling surroundings with few facilities.⁵ For the mass of students from rural areas of the country, starting university was their first experience of not only living in an anonymous impersonal city, but also meeting different national communities, especially Jews who attended universities in disproportionate numbers. Many professors and academics in inter-war Europe also held strongly nationalistic and anti-Semitic views and universities were centres of nationalism and breeding-grounds for anti-Semitism and fascist ideas. All this was hardly helped by the high level of unemployment amongst graduates who had been led to believe that they were the nucleus of a future national élite. Huge disappointment, coupled with alienation and poverty, made university youth extremely receptive to the fascist message.⁶

Like other European fascist Movements, the Ustasha Movement presented their struggle as a simple one between the young and the old, between the modernity of fascism and the decrepitude of democracy. While the Ustashes certainly did not disdain Croatia's long and proud history – indeed quite the contrary – at the same time they viewed Croatia as a new remade and resurrected state with all the exciting utopian possibilities this suggested. Under their rule, the Ustashes argued, all the manifestations of the old mentality – democracy, plutocracy, liberalism and, above all, Yugoslavism – would be swept away. The Ustashes envisaged a Croatia in which the spirit of nationalist youth, seen as the heralds of the revolution, would be harnessed for the good of the nation. However, they also believed that youth would one day become the élite of the new society and they assumed they would remain faithful to the Movement's radical vision.

A New Youth in a New State: Croatians become Yugoslavs

On the eve of the First World War Croatian nationalist youth was in turmoil: rebellion and insurrection permeated the air. As centralism and repression increased in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in response to increasing political violence, nationalist youth began to call for violence, sacrifice and revolution to achieve an independent Croatia and shake off foreign rule. The poet, Tin Ujević, for example, proclaimed that “integral nationalism” was no “half-measure” and demanded “sacrifice” even if it meant the “most extreme consequences.” For him and many other young nationalists, freedom could be achieved only through aggression and revolution. He reasoned that for a nation trapped in a “robber state,” integral nationalism was always reached “by insurrectionary means.”⁷

Nationalist youth in Croatia, to the extent that they were organised, fell into two groups: the Young Croats and the Clericalists. In spite of this, they were all followers of Starčević's idea of an independent Greater Croatian state. The Young Croatia movement was formed in 1908 at the beginning of the Raich dictatorship in Croatia. Heavily influenced by the thinking of Antun Gustav Matoš, a poet and

Frank acolyte, its members envisaged their organisation as a future youth “army” of the Croatian Party of Rights. At the centre of their organisation was the debate about their relationship with and attitude to the ethnic Serbs in their country. In this respect, Matoš was a contradictory figure to have as an idol. On the one hand, he rejected the participation of Croatian Serbs in the political arena; on the other, he advocated the collaboration of the South Slav nations in the cultural sphere. At its inception, the Young Croatia Movement was integralist Croatian, rather than Yugoslav. It sought a union of all lands which it deemed as Croat and, in opposition to other youth groups, such as the Progressive Youth, it rejected the idea of South Slav co-operation. “At the apex of our organisation it states: exclusive Croatian nationalism as an antidote for all other ideas! Cleanliness, freedom, independence, radicalisation of youth,” stated their newspaper. It added that the idea of three equal religions was “a national danger” and it complained about the “aggressiveness” of the Serbian name.⁸ Although anti-clerical, the Young Croats perceived Serbian anti-religious activism as an attack on “pure Croatianism”; moreover, like Matoš, they believed that the idea of a Serbian people in Bosnia Hercegovina was a fiction. Some more radical Starčević youth negated the existence of a Serbian people outside of Serbia completely. Consequently, conflicts with Serbian students were frequent. During the Annexation Crisis of 1908 and the High Treason trials of prominent Croatian Serbs by the authorities, these nationalist youths took an implacably Frankist line. Young Croatia invited its members to register for the National Legionaries that Frankist supporters had created to fight rebellious Serbs in Bosnia; likewise, they welcomed the High Treason trials, arbitrarily declared the Serbian name in Croatia illegal and condemned those, like Tomas Masaryk, who defended the accused.⁹

By 1911 a split had emerged within the ranks of the Young Croatia movement: whilst one faction, headed by Mile Budak, continued to propagate an integral Croatianism which negated the idea of a Serbian nation in Croatia, others, such as Ujević, influenced not only by artists such as the sculptor Ivan Meštrović but also by the impressive successes of Serbia in the two Balkan wars (1912-1913) began to

articulate a more Yugoslav message. To change from being a Croatian nationalist into a Yugoslav did not necessarily involve a great leap in ideology. The Young Croats had long argued that Serbs in Croatia were really Orthodox Croats; by the same token, many nationalist Serbs argued that Croats were really Catholic Serbs. If this was so, then really Serbs and Croats were one nation: a Yugoslav nation. As the former Young Croat and Ujević collaborator, Krešimir Kovačić, commented on the eve of a visit to Belgrade to express solidarity with Serb students: "The Croats should never forget that there exists a free Croatian state - Serbia - just as the Serbs should never forget that there exists an unfree Serbian state - Croatia."¹⁰

The cultural acceptance of Yugoslavism did not mean that Young Croats suddenly were transformed into Yugoslav nationalists, Activists like Ujević and Kovačić believed that in being future members of a South Slav federation, they were better Croatian nationalists. Ujević commented in the newspaper *Jedinstvo* in 1913: "Serbs, Croats and Slovenes are one! Never before has our nation, one Serbo-Croatian and Slovene nation, felt itself more as one nor more as a nation: never before have Serbs been so Serbian, Croats more Croatian, Croats more Serbian, Serbs more Croatian, Slovenes more Serbo-Croatian, never before have we felt so conscious of our essence or our unity."¹¹ A key figure in influencing youth that their Croatianism was really embryonic Yugoslavism was the Belgrade University professor, Jovan Skerlić. His interpretation of the teachings of Ante Starčević, the father of Croatian nationalism, made a profound impression on them. Rejecting the idea that Starčević was a prophet of Great Croatia, anti-Serb ideology, he argued that he was, in fact, a proto-Yugoslav. Janko Baričević was simply one Young Croat youth who came away transformed from a meeting with Skerlić. "I learnt that Starčević was the greatest Yugoslav there was. And I was a Yugoslav too but it was not conscious to me. The above syllogism was worth more to me than an entire library."¹²

The rhetoric of the Young Croats was apocalyptic and extreme. Vladimir Čerina wrote that Zagreb found itself in a stage of "national, social and cultural syphilis." What was required, he argued, was "a moral and political purgatory." At

the head of this Armageddon stood the poet, Vladimir Nazor, "the apostle of our national energy, our national optimism and our national religion...the finest and most terrible voice of our blood and our race, the poet of the future revolution of the soul."¹³ Inspired by the victory of the Serbs in Kosovo in 1912, Čerina added that heroism, by which he meant military heroism, was the "highest, most grand and only manifesto of idealism." Reinforcing the idea that Yugoslavism was the expression of a new generation, nationalist youth from Dubrovnik talked of a patricidal war against an older corrupt generation which would be pursued with "warrior" methods and "energetic sacrificial activity."¹⁴ Yet it was the United Youth of Šibenik who surely gave the clearest expression of this juxtaposition.

Our fathers may wish to know they are not ours as long as the blood does not course in their veins and their brains do not pulsate with the streams of this nationalism. Titans, heroes, common people! No one who is not with us can be a part of us. Those with us are those with strength and pride, honour and morals, soul and reason! Down with the bankrupting of strength! Down with the bankrupting of pride! Down with the bankrupting of honour! Down with the bankrupting of morals! Down with the bankrupting of the soul! Down with the bankrupting of reason! At the least we need yesterday, at the most we need the future!¹⁵

Utopianism and Despair: Yugoslav Youth and Political Radicalism

Yugoslav youths had been among the standard-bearers of the revolution which had created their South Slav state and in 1918 they believed they were building a new utopian society. Tin Ujević envisioned a futuristic Belgrade of "expansion, electricity" and "white, black, brown and green cars which celebrate the victory of money and petrol" and the creation of a "dynamic, explosive and frequently bombastic world."¹⁶ The Slovene writer, Bogumil Vošnjak, likewise called for "dazzling colours, landscapes, temperaments, habits which constitute a wonderful heavenly harmony and totality."¹⁷ But Belgrade was also the capital of a new state which disappointed many young Yugoslavs with its conservatism and

authoritarianism. Increasingly, Yugoslav ideologists like Vošnjak, looked back with nostalgia to the years before the First World War when hopes were still high as an idyllic period. "That was a fantastic period," he would write. "The empire fell like a house of straw, the most courageous utopia looked like it would be fulfilled."¹⁸

The major youth organisation in the Yugoslav Kingdom was the Sokol, a liberal, principally pan-Slav gymnastics society which encouraged secularism, the ideals of Yugoslavism, the mixing of boys and girls and a cult of physical culture. After the creation of a unitary Yugoslavia in January 1929, the Sokol became even more a symbol of Yugoslav unity. As such they became a target for anti-Semitic Yugoslav newspapers during the 1930s for their alleged Jewish and Free Masons sympathies and by the Catholic Church in Slovenia and Croatia for allegedly promoting immorality and disdain for religion (including the destruction of the Catholic Church).¹⁹ While the Sokols were officially apolitical, Yugoslav unitarism produced a number of radical nationalist youth movements, the most combative of which was the Organisation of Yugoslav Youth (*Organizacija jugoslovenskih omladina* - Orunja). Violent and extreme, the Organisation of Yugoslav Youth saw itself as the successor of the Revolutionary Youth groups of pre-war Croatia and Bosnia and an avant-garde propagator of a Yugoslav nationality.²⁰ Although Communist historians often denigrated it as a front organisation of Nikola Pašić's Radical Party, it was persecuted not just by Croatian nationalist youth groups but also, as one of its supporters, the writer Niko Bartulović explained, by the Pašić government.²¹ In any case, its radicalism and violence perfectly suited the spirit of the times. As a youth activist of one of the more democratic parties admitted in 1923, youth in Yugoslavia were "without orientation or ideas, without a future and without a worldly perspective." In such a situation, liberal ideals simply did not capture the imagination of youths in the same way as extreme nationalism with its cult of violence.²²

In the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, students were especially drawn to nationalist and politically radical groups. There were two main reasons for this. In Yugoslavia, the vast majority of students were incredibly poor: only five per cent of students

received government grants; scholarships from other sources such as the armed forces were rare and were, in any case, paltry. Moreover, post-war Yugoslav universities were hopelessly overcrowded and many students were reduced to sleeping on park benches or in army barracks. Affordable food was also scarce. When this was added to the sense of isolation and loneliness which many students felt when they first arrived at university, it is small wonder that militant politics appealed to freshmen.²³ In the villages where many of the most uncompromising students came from, social conditions were appalling. With the process of modernisation, towns and villages were being brought closer together. However, the spread of urban values to the countryside did not improve social mobility or increase prosperity. On the contrary, it led to the breakdown of rural codes of coercion and control. By the late 1930s, commentators were painting a bleak picture of an alcoholic indolent rural youth obsessed by knives and violence. In one famous study of 1938, a Croatian Peasant party activist warned that urban problems such as prostitution, venereal diseases and marriage breakdown, not to mention crushing poverty, were becoming the bane of rural life in Bosnia and Croatia.²⁴ Since teachers were reluctant to teach in these remote communities, youth had little opportunity of escaping their bleak landscape. For those students who did, they had the unenviable choice of living near starvation level in a strange city or staying at home where suitable conditions for studying were practically non-existent.²⁵ After graduation, many students could look forward only to unemployment, becoming in effect a kind of educated proletariat.²⁶

However, the propensity of students to be drawn to politically extreme organisations can probably also be ascribed to a simple adolescent need to rebel against a conservative, militaristic and repressive state. According to Milovan Djilas, who during the 1930s was a Communist student at the University of Belgrade, it was not political concerns, but rather a shared community of anarchy and literature which drew him and his comrades together. "There was romantic, rebellious excess in everything we did at that time," he later recalled.²⁷

“Revenge is ours!” The Nationalist Youth Struggle in inter-war Croatia

In inter-war Croatia, nationalist activity was centred around student clubs at the University of Zagreb and nationalist youth groups. There appears to have been two main types of nationalist youth groups in Croatia: secular organisations and religious movements, although often it was hard to tell the difference between them since their membership tended to overlap. Their ideology was also similar in that it was a militant form of nationalism based on the belief that Croatia was decaying morally and culturally in Yugoslavia and the Croats losing their sense of national consciousness. Such groups often indeed argued that the Croats were close to extermination. In this situation, only a merciless war of liberation could save the nation.

The principal organisation of Catholic youth in Croatia was the Eagles (*Orlovi*) led by Dr Ivo Protupilac and Dr Ivan Merz, which after the outlawing of all national youth groups in Yugoslavia in 1929, was renamed the Great Brotherhood of Crusaders (*Veliko bratstvo križari*—VBK). The Crusaders, as the organisation was popularly known, was founded as a Catholic gymnastic club to counteract the secular and Yugoslavist ideals of the Sokol. As such, the organisation had the full support of the Catholic hierarchy in Croatia. At the Catholic Bishops’ conference of 1924, a statement of the Bishops lauded the Eagles as a movement leading a “war against all the enemies of the Church and its beliefs.”²⁸ After its renaming in 1929, the organisation, always strongly Catholic, became militantly so. Like Yugoslav nationalist groups, it became more combative and violent and confrontations with Sokol groups were common.²⁹ In addition to the Crusaders, there were also numerous secular youth groups in inter-war Croatia, many of which either disappeared very quickly or were banned for their violent behaviour. Some, like the Croatian National Youth (*Hrvatska nacionalna omladina*—Hanao), were intended for bourgeois students whereas others, such as Croatian Labour Youth (*Hrvatska radnička omladina*—Harao), attempted to prevent urban working-class youths joining Communist and socialist organisations. After

the outlawing of these organisations, two other organisations were formed: the Croatian Pravaši Republican Youth (*Hrvatska pravaška republikana omladina*) led by Branimir Jelić and the Croatian Prevaši Labour Youth (*Hrvatska pravaška radnička omladina*) led by Stipe Javor.³⁰

The Croatian Pravaši Republican Youth, founded in 1927, followed the lead set by the Croatian National Youth and quickly turned from a militant nationalist organisation into a terrorist one.³¹ It was from the HPRO that the first Croatian paramilitary unit, the Croatian Home guard (*Hrvatski Domobran*), was formed. By their second congress of 1928, the HPRO had decided to launch an armed insurrection against the Yugoslav state. Through their student journals, these nationalist youths led by many future leaders of the Ustasha Movement such as Branimir Jelić and Mijo Bzik, vowed to annihilate Yugoslavia. They believed that they were living under an oppressive and morally decadent regime which could be destroyed only through violence. They painted a grim picture of life in Croatia in the months leading up to the tenth anniversary of the founding of Yugoslavia. Under Yugoslav rule, the Croats were fighting for their biological survival. They were “completely materially destroyed, robbed, in debt, naked, barefoot and hungry” as the first edition of one of their newspapers would have it.³² As far as they were concerned, the very Yugoslav idea, never mind the grim reality, was illegitimate. They argued that 1918 marked not the coming together of three tribes in brotherhood and unity, but rather the start of Croatia’s capitulation to the “thievery, corruption, plunder and banditry” of Balkan rule and the “bacillus of Balkanism.” The idea of brotherly love was simply a “ridiculous phrase about the artificial creation of a new nation” and they would not be the “gravediggers” of their national life.³³ Indeed, so strong was their desire for an independent Croatia free from Serb rule that anybody who did not share their philosophy was for them no longer a Croat and was instead a “national traitor.” This disdain extended to the politicians of the various parties who charted a moderate course. Thus Radić, who could hardly be accused of cravenness towards Belgrade, was accused of “licking the boots of those whom yesterday he threw mud at,” so outraging Croatian student youth with his “traitorous deeds” that they had joined

the Croatian Party of Right en masse.³⁴ Instead, they looked to figures from Croatia's great and glorious past to inform their own behaviour and promised to be an avenging army for all the victims of Serb tyranny.³⁵

The events of 20 June 1928 when Croatian students had rioted on the streets of Zagreb for three days in protest at the assassination of the Peasant leader, Radić, months earlier castigated as a Serb lackey, became a founding myth of the student nationalist movement. Three youths – Jerbić, Bjelos and Majčen - had been killed during the protests and their graves quickly became sites of pilgrimage for students. At the funerals of the youths, an editorial in their journal proclaimed that all those who had fallen in “the empire of injustice, crimes, lies and barbarism cry out for revenge, cry out for reprisals.” Nationalist youth was duty-bound to carry out this vow.³⁶ More than a vow of revenge, nationalist youths also believed that they were creating something more permanent. They saw themselves as the youth legionaries of a new “powerful and fearless generation” of “young enthusiastic militant Croats” and “apostles of Croatian liberationist thought.” For them, the events of June had signalled the beginning of the war against the Yugoslav state. There was no question that the war, when it came would be terrible and violent as far as they were concerned. The phalange of Croat youth would provide a “manly answer” to those who had oppressed the Croats and they would trample over the “demonic diabolical forces” which had opposed Croatia's freedom. The new movement of Croatian youth would punish all national traitors mercilessly; it was like “an iron chain which will smash in the teeth of all those who dare to oppose it.”³⁷

On 1 December 1928 the Yugoslav Kingdom celebrated ten years of its uncertain existence. For nationalist youth, the fact that there was to be a celebration at St Mark's Cathedral simply added insult to injury. On the day of the festivities, nationalist youths distributed leaflets on the streets of Zagreb which instructed citizens not to celebrate what it saw as a day of shame and defeat.³⁸ Three youths also planted a black flag each on the roof of the Cathedral to represent the three catastrophes which had engulfed Croatia since 1918: the creation of a Yugoslav state in 1918; the failed anti-Yugoslav Domobran uprising of 5 December 1918

and the assassination of Radić in 1928. At the University of Zagreb, black flags were hoisted at the Faculty of Law into which students had barricaded themselves and Yugoslav banners torn down. In the violent confrontation which followed, a student, Stanko Petrić, was shot dead by the police. According to a student account of these events, the whole of Zagreb rose up against this foreign rule. By the end of this day of celebration, a number of students had been arrested and, in response, nationalist students called for strikes at the University until all their comrades had been released. Alleging that the arrested students were being tortured by the police, they warned non-committed students that violence awaited anybody who disobeyed the strike call.³⁹

The militancy of Croatian university youth must be understood in the context of the position of universities as seats of higher learning in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Although universities, according to the Constitution of 1919, were technically autonomous institutions, in practice there was a significant element of state interference and professors and teachers were routinely removed from tenured positions for possessing inappropriate political opinions. In 1924, for example, the central government sacked a group of professors at the University of Zagreb. This was condemned in a furious student resolution which accused the authorities of wanting to make universities into caricatures with “the systematic bulldozing and persecution of all those who think freely or differently.”⁴⁰ This tense and authoritarian atmosphere was compounded by the presence of large numbers of students from poor rural areas of Bosnia and Croatia who were susceptible to extreme ideologies and nationalist ideas.⁴¹ Yet for all the censorship of the central government, nationalist students were perfectly capable of the same impulses themselves when confronted with ideas they did not like. In 1934, for example, a number of student clubs at the University of Zagreb sent a memorandum to the leading Croatian cultural institution, *Matica Hrvatska*, calling for liberal Croatian writers or those who had had work published in Belgrade to be censored from its journal because they were “traitors, deserters and émigrés.”⁴² Similarly, when the sociologist, Dinko Tomašić, presented a seminar at the philosophy faculty in 1937, nationalist students rioted and pelted

him with eggs for his lack of “knowledge” and “objectivity,” complaining that in citing “degenerate” and “pan-sexual” sociologists such as Sigmund Freud, he was showing his leftist bias. Liberal journals, by contrast, interpreted it as a sign of the depressing ascendancy of nationalist extremism at Croatia’s educational institution.⁴³

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that nationalist students alone were responsible for the extremism on campus. The University of Zagreb (like the University of Belgrade) of the 1920s and 1930s was the site of a fierce conflict between ideologically extreme and opposed students which mirrored conflicts in the Kingdom itself. Although most students showed little interest in politics, students who were politically active were drawn to groups and organisations advocating radical solutions to social and national questions. Like other states in Eastern Europe, South Slav campuses had long had a reputation for radicalism. Indeed, in the pre-war period, Croatian and Serbian students at the University of Zagreb as well as those studying at foreign seats of learning such as Prague, were often the most zealous and radical advocates of Yugoslavism. When nationalist Croatian students produced a brochure condemning the murder of the Balkan anthropologist Milan Šufflay by members of Young Yugoslavia, a radical youth group, they presented his summary dismissal from the University of Zagreb in 1918 as incontrovertible proof of the manner in which Great Serb politicians persecuted Croatian nationalists. In fact, he had been dismissed not on the orders of the Serbian Radical Party but Croatian students angry at his (and other professors’) pro-Habsburg and anti-Yugoslav sympathies. Likewise, in 1920 Ivica Frank, Manko Gagliardi and Vladimir Sachs were stripped of their law doctorates by the academic senate of the University of Zagreb on the initiative of students, resentful at their role in fomenting anti-Serb pogroms in pre-war Croatia.⁴⁴ By the late 1930s, the influence of nationalist students, always strong, was growing and their support increasing. In a series of student council elections, Frankists gained control of faculty after faculty and their programme, which included a call for a *numerus clausus* for Jewish students, was only narrowly defeated in 1939. By 1940, the Frankists were the largest student faction on campus, closely

followed by the Communists and, inevitably, there were violent confrontations between these two groups, leading to the death of at least one young Communist, Krsto Ljubčić, in 1937.⁴⁵

It would also be wrong to suggest that Frankist students were nothing more than the rabble of reactionary, fascist and aggressive nationalists Communist historians portrayed them as. Nationalist students did not merely see the University of Zagreb as the centre of the resistance of the Croatian people to Serbian rule and themselves as the élite heralds of a new society, a future national intelligentsia.⁴⁶ They did not only agitate for national rights; they also had a social agenda too. For them, national and social rights were indistinguishable. In a student resolution of 1936, for example, issued in protest at conditions at the University, they declared that they were fighting not only for national but also class and professional rights. Only with a proper education could they contribute to the social progress of the nation.⁴⁷ Similarly, when, in 1939, an anthology of nationalist student poetry was published, although it contained the work of many later well-known nationalist poets, it contained no explicitly nationalist poems in the manner understood in the works of nineteenth and early twentieth-century poets such as August Hrambašić, Silivimir Kranjević or Matoš because the emphasis had to be on the quality of the writing not the vigour of its nationalist sentiment, according to the anthology's editor.⁴⁸

In 1940, a number of Frankist students at the law faculty of the University of Zagreb were arrested for anti-state activities by the government of the Croatian Banovina. After a quick trial in which they were found guilty, they were imprisoned. According to later Ustasha propaganda they spent their time there singing Ustasha songs of loyalty and shouting through their cell windows: "Come home Ante: the Homeland is calling you!" This so infuriated the Ban that he had them transferred to the notorious prison camp at Lepoglava.⁴⁹ At this time, Ustasha ideas were spreading amongst not only university but also high-school students through the propaganda efforts of Ustasha activists, teachers and parish priests and with the connivance of many other respectable institutions in cities, towns and, above all, villages. By 1940, illegal high-school societies were being

founded, many of which appear to have been front organisations for youth terrorist groups.⁵⁰ Simultaneously, youth organisations of the Ustasha Movement were being formed in secret, organised by Ustasha Youth leaders and Ustasha student commissars. The hour of the revolution of Croat youth was approaching.

Youth Organisations in the Independent State of Croatia

Like other fascist and rightist organisations, the Ustashes portrayed their Movement as a generational revolution in which a young dynamic movement would replace the exhausted discredited politicians of the past. According to one ideologue, *ustashtvo* was a “revolution, a crossroads between two lives; the one that was, the one that has passed and the one which is building the foundations of a new society.”⁵¹ With its militant, apocalyptic and iconoclastic tendencies and its disdain for bourgeois respectability and propriety, Ustasha rhetoric appealed to the rebellious instincts of the young. However, more practically, the Ustasha revolution offered young people the opportunity to be active participants in the construction of a new society. Since the demographic structure of the Ustasha Movement was extremely young itself, the Ustasha seizure of power and the concomitant radical re-ordering of society offered youth a level of power and influence which their age and experience would surely not have warranted in a democratic society.

The Ustasha Movement was a voluntaristic movement; although pressure was exerted by local officials and activists to encourage the young to join the Movement's youth organisation, membership was not compulsory. There were four basic sections within the Ustasha Youth organisation. From the age of seven to eleven, children joined Ustasha Hope (*Ustaška uzdanica*); from eleven to fifteen the Ustasha Hero organisation (*Ustaški junak*) and from the age of fifteen to eighteen the Starčević Youth (*Starčevićeva mladež*). For university students, there was a separate organisation. All the youth organisations emphasised the

values of physical fitness, moral virtue and comradeship. At the same time, most other youth organisations, clubs and societies were banned. This does not mean that their members automatically joined the Ustasha Youth organisations. Young people joined the ranks of the Ustasha youth organisation for various reasons, the least of which was compulsion. Although the constitution of the Ustasha Youth proclaimed that only death or expulsion could end membership in the Movement, political radicalism was only one reason why young people enrolled.⁵² The Ustasha Youth organisations founded their own specialist schools and societies where children could develop their athletic, intellectual and artistic talents and they also ran training courses where young Ustashes could gain qualifications to become élite young leaders. Therefore, ambition on the part of both youths and parents must have played a role. The desire to be part of an extraordinary national movement must also have been a motivating factor. For some, the Ustasha Youth movement gave a sense of meaning to their lives, especially those who gained positions of power, such as becoming camp leaders. It is not known how many young people joined the Ustasha youth organisations; Ustasha youth leaders such as Zdenko Blažeković claimed half a million members which was surely too high a figure. Yet it also appears that in the initial months of its creation, many thousands of youths, flocked to its ranks, eager to be a part of the new Movement; indeed, by May 1941, some Ustasha Youth camps were already publicly refusing to take new members as they lacked the capacity to do so.⁵³

The radical reorganisation of education and, first and foremost the universities, was an integral aspect of the Ustashes' youth policy. One of the first acts of the Minister of Education and Religion, Mile Budak, was to announce the ideological purging of academic institutions. In particular, he announced the intention of the Movement to prevent anyone who was not in agreement with their ideology to teach at University. Serb professors and teachers of a Yugoslavist orientation would be purged from this "great scholarly institution." A commissariat was appointed to the university, led by the rector, Professor Stjepan Zimmerman, one of whose first tasks was to purge the universities of politically "questionable" elements. Remaining professors and teachers would be "imbued with at least a

grasp of Ustasha ideology.” How this was to be achieved was never made clear, especially since Budak claimed that many professors and teaching assistants at the University of Zagreb already sympathised with Ustasha principles. Budak also vowed not only to remove Serb and Jewish students but also to destroy the “Masonic leftism” of the medicine and technical faculties, the sole university departments Frankist students never managed to gain control of in the 1930s.⁵⁴ To ensure ideological conformity, all student clubs and societies were abolished or were placed under the control of Ustasha student commissars. However, at the same time, Budak also promised a renaissance in Croatian universities: they would be given back their autonomy and, as a reward for the nationalist activism of students in the inter-war era, the Ustashes announced a number of grandiose building schemes and projects for the University of Zagreb. These plans included a new faculty of medicine – to replace the then-current premises with their memories of Serbian, Jewish and anti-Frankist activism.⁵⁵

Budak announced a similar policy towards schools. Arguing that under the Yugoslav regime, an anti-Croatian sentiment had prevailed, all school text books from this period were removed and replaced with Austro-Hungarian era books, specially adapted to the new national spirit. Budak envisaged that schools in Croatia would be transformed into “hothouses of Ustasha philosophy and patriotism” from which would emerge a new generation capable of continuing the ideals of the Ustasha revolution. As with university professors, schools were to be ideologically purged; however, Budak emphasised that teachers could save their careers by “sincerely converting to the Ustasha cause.” Yet it appears that the ambitions of the Ustashes raced ahead of practicality. In remarks addressed to nationalist high-school students, who zealously called for the sacking of all disloyal teachers, Budak was forced to explain that it would not be possible to expel all teachers of an allegedly anti-national persuasion at once since then “many schools would have to close.”⁵⁶

Blue-Stockinged Radicals or Indolent Loafers? Nationalist Students and University Life under the Ustashas

The University of Zagreb which Croatian students returned to in the summer semester of 1941 was a very different institution to the one they had left a few weeks before. If the Ustasha press was to be believed, the dark days of Yugoslav misrule at the University had been succeeded by the enlightened administration of the Ustashas who would bring prosperity, autonomy and, most importantly, national pride to the academy. As one student journal proudly announced, "This year, only Croats are registered at this university."⁵⁷ Not only this, but Zagreb University students could look forward to bright future careers as bureaucrats, politicians and intellectual workers. Students had taken an active role in the Ustasha revolution. Three days after the creation of the Independent State of Croatia, nationalist student organisations such as the Croatian Scouts, the Croatian Heroes and the "terrorist organisation" the Matija Gubec university club had organised a march in front of Colonel Slavko Kvaternik in a demonstration of unity and loyalty to the new state.⁵⁸ Students also helped to burn the books of censored writers and expel and purge ideologically and racially-suspect teachers and professors.⁵⁹ They were also amongst the first to join the Ustashas' paramilitary formations, above all the élite Black Legion and the Poglavnik's Personal Bodyguard (*Poglavnikova tjelesne bojne* – PTB). Small wonder that the Ustashas mythologised them as the golden generation who had exchanged the "pen for the rifle and beautiful lecture halls for army barracks" in order to fight for the liberation of their homeland.⁶⁰

From the very inception of the State, nationalist students were lauded for their contribution to the liberation of Croatia and the sacrifices they had made. It was they who in their battles with the regime and Communist students at the University of Zagreb had sacrificed their young lives in the biological defence of the nation: they were the Poglavnik's generation, the children of the Croatian Alkazar.⁶¹ At Christmas of 1941, many newspaper articles in Ustasha youth journals recalled the prison experiences of nationalist students arrested at the

University of Zagreb Law Club at Christmas 1940 and led away from the jeers of Serbophile students to incarceration.⁶² Jerko Skračić, a popular poet in Croatia who had been one of those nationalist students arrested by the authorities in 1940, wrote a memoir of his months in Lepoglava prison which was published in 1942. Entitled *Pod drugom ključom* (Under Another's Lock and Key), Skračić described the aim of his memoir as an attempt to chronicle "everything that the Croatian prisoners experienced under the united rule of national traitors and the Belgrade rulers in the last days of the notoriously artificial state." His only worry, he confessed, in writing the book was that many of the former prison comrades were now government ministers and officials, which simply served to underline the prevalence of students in the early Ustasha Movement.⁶³ Skračić described the University Law Club at Zagreb as "the nest of Ustashtvo" and hence the reason for the arrest for so many of its members in 1940. Zlatko Milković's *Tamnica* (The Prison, 1942), a work of fiction, also followed the fate of group of nationalist university students, focussing on the relationship between two student activists, Petar and Tonči, their grim struggle against the authorities and the girl who comes between them. A social realist novel which weaved a fictitious story with real-life events, the novel ended with a climactic battle between the police and rioting students at the University in which Milković imagined the low metal fence between the police and the students to be a barrier between two worlds, "the fervour of youth, the fervour of idealism and sincere outrage at the injustice and suffering of the whole Croat nation" opposing "alien foreign money, sick ambition and bestial half-evolved men who shoot as soon as they are given a gun and kill with a rifle butt because they were told to kill."⁶⁴ In the denouement, Petar stays in Zagreb to continue the national struggle while Tonči flees across the border to travel to an Ustasha terrorist camp. Many older reviewers gave the novel a surprisingly cold reception; at best, they saw it as a useful social document of a part of Croatia's struggle and, at worst, as a lamentable effort from a gifted young writer. While mature reviewers singled out the novel's documentary-style of narration as particularly worthy of criticism, younger critics were unashamedly enthusiastic. Vlado Miličević, a student, for example,

highlighted the author's use of neo-realist narration as entirely appropriate to a discussion of the "gloomy and sterile Yugoslav reality" and the fervour of an entire generation united by the desire to escape gaol, freed from foreign rule. Young intellectuals such as Miličević were also attracted to the novel because of its romanticisation of the nationalist student struggle in Yugoslavia and their identification with the characters in it.⁶⁵

Despite the criticism of at least one reviewer that *Tamnica*, in focussing on the sacrifices of nationalist students, ignored the contribution of other social classes, if nothing else it appears to have captured the nationalist fervour and ideological fanaticism of one section of Croatian university students in inter-war Croatia and the Independent State of Croatia. The élite Ustasha units, such as the Poglavnik's Body Guard, for example, attracted the most ideologically and idealistic of young men. Obituaries of such students generally described them as modest, thoughtful to others, ideologically committed and loyal comrades, but also as deeply religious, emotional and fanatical.⁶⁶ When Communists attacked Ustasha student guards in August 1941 at the University of Zagreb, injuring twenty-three of them, one explanation given for the assault on the students was that it was punishment for the students' role as the "heralds of nationalism and revolutionary feeling" in inter-war Croatia. Their sacrifice in the inter-war period, however, paled into insignificance with their conduct in revolutionary Croatia. An interviewer sent to speak to the injured students whose faces appeared as a montage on the cover of the leading Ustasha youth journal, reported that, although they lay wounded, on their lips a smile flickered, "a smile of contentment and happiness, proud that drops of their blood sprinkled the foundations of our new State. Proud of every drop of blood which drained from their wounds."⁶⁷

Government officials and Ustasha ministers also believed that university students had been the best Croatian nationalists not only in the inter-war period but also in the revolutionary State. Mile Budak, for example, lauded the sacrifices of student youth marching as orderly as soldiers to Mirigoj on 1 November 1940 to honour Starčević; Mladen Lorković called nationalist student clubs the "embryos" of the Ustasha Movement and the students in them "fanatical warriors

for the resurrection of Croatia"; Jure Pavičić believed that no one had demonstrated such "effort, labour and sacrifice" as university youth had.⁶⁸ In October 1941, in recognition of their role in spreading the Ustasha philosophy in villages and towns and fighting heroically against the "Serb occupationist forces" in the dying days of Yugoslavia, the Poglavnik made the Ustasha university battalion a constituent part of his personal bodyguard.⁶⁹

It is not difficult to see why certain sections of student youth were attracted to the Ustasha ideology. In their propaganda, the Ustashes consistently employed a rhetoric of revolution and radicalism. Yet the iconoclastic and chiliastic aspects of the Ustasha ideology also appealed to university students. The Ustasha ideology emphasised the need to divest oneself of all concepts of bourgeois decency and propriety in order to become a merciless warrior. It also impressed on its followers that it was an ideology of the young engaged in a war of physical and psychological warfare with the old in which everything which it considered reactionary and anti-revolutionary would be destroyed. Thus, the Swedish diplomat's wife who, at an official banquet, expressed such horror when Zdenko Blažeković, the Ustasha student commissar, boasted of the huge numbers of Serbs he had killed, adding that he kept their ears on a necklace for special occasions, should perhaps not have been so shocked.⁷⁰ There were also rather more basic reasons why many students would rally to the new regime. With the creation of the Independent State of Croatia, military and social regimentation increased greatly. Yet in comparison to the atomised and chaotic educational system which often prevailed in Yugoslavia, when the right to a university education too often relied on a rich supporter or a paltry government stipend, free speech and democratic institutions did not mean very much. As a Movement which believed in social as well as national revolution, at the same time as they were purging the university of national and political enemies, they were also opening it up to students whose socially-deprived backgrounds would normally have excluded them from university by means of a greatly-expanded system of student scholarships.⁷¹ In the four years of the existence of the Croatian state, the numbers of students registering at the University of Zagreb, especially women,

increased exponentially. In the autumn semester of 1941, out of 1335 students in the philosophy faculty, 778 were women; by spring 1942, the number of women in the law faculty had risen from a figure of 120 in the autumn semester of 1941 to 727 compared to 440 men.⁷² The Ustashas also developed existing student social welfare services. The Bureau for the Social and Physical Protection of Universities and High Schools Students, for example, had been established by Doctor Andrija Štampar in the 1930s to help ameliorate the effects of chronic malnutrition, homelessness and poverty amongst Croatian students. Under the Ustashas, this office under Štampar's deputy, the Ustasha student commissar, Josip Blažek, was nationalised and expanded. Štampar himself was arrested and incarcerated due to his Communist sympathies.⁷³ Since the Ustashas ruled an extremely ideological state, new avenues of opportunity were opened up for students so long as they subscribed, or pretended to subscribe, to the Ustasha cause. In becoming a student commissar, for example, one gained a uniform, importance and privileges (such as being excused the necessity of sitting university exams) which would have seemed unthinkable in Yugoslavia. Students who opted for the Ustasha army over the Home Army were offered an automobile, a flat and a handsome salary: the government would even pay their travel costs to the interview. A student, in a short period of time, became someone. In addition, because the Ustasha cause was tied irrevocably to the national cause, the Ustashas appealed to students of a patriotic nature keen to serve in a community of brotherhood with others for the good of their nation.

Even if one could not become powerful immediately, the lure of future rewards was dangled before the eyes of students. As far as the Ustashas were concerned, university youth were the intellectual *élite* of the new Croatia.⁷⁴ According to Milivoj Magdić, it was youth who could reinvigorate a revolution, giving it new dynamism and energy. In comparison to Communist youth who were excessively dogmatic, Ustasha students would be the practical new *élite* of Croatian national politics. This would not mean that they would become a new intelligentsia—a term the Ustashas loathed since it suggested softness and theorising—but they would be the future rulers of Croatia.⁷⁵ Nor did it signal that the leading cadres of

the Ustasha Movement were contemplating handing over power or willing to taken into account the wishes of students in any meaningful way. Even the Ustasha commissars who were at the apex of student power in the state enjoyed little or no influence or authority, as they themselves admitted. Despite this, Ustasha students were a spoilt and somewhat cosseted sect in the academy, enjoying special privilege and rights. For example, the benchmark set for them to pass examinations was set at a much lower level than for other students and, in some cases, when they had consistently failed exams, they were able to drop subjects they found difficult. This brand of favouritism hardly served to endear them to their non-Ustasha fellow students.⁷⁶ The appearance of such ostensibly unacademic courses such as the theory of Ustashtvo also did little to convince students that the university was anything more meaningful than the plaything of the regime.⁷⁷

Between 1941 and 1945, student enthusiasm, if not support, for the Ustasha regime appears to have declined quite dramatically, even amongst its supporters. Amongst ideologically uncommitted students, this sentiment increased in direct proportion to the decline in the Ustashtvo's control of the State. Such students were coming under the influence of the Congress of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia and other anti-fascist youth groups. The Ustashtvos were well aware of what was happening at the universities since, in addition to youth commissars, they also had a well-coordinated network of student spies and secret informers. As early as 1942, in a speech to female university students, the Poglavnik had warned them to take care that young freshwomen arriving at university did not come under the influence of "foreign" or dangerous ideas, by which he meant Yugoslavist and communist ideas. Likening it to a disease, he urged his listeners to isolate new students from these ideas and imbue them with Ustasha and Croat ideals. Students, he proclaimed, should be prepared to die to make the homeland properly Croatian and Ustasha.⁷⁸ Despite their nationalist reputation, from the start, the Ustashtvos did not seem to have entirely trusted the student community and as early as 1941, calls for students to attend rallies and meetings of student

commissars were punctuated by warnings that the names of those who failed to attend would be noted and they would face "Ustasha justice."⁷⁹

Initially, anti-fascist students found it difficult to gather support; most students remained apolitical or were scared. Indeed, Ustasha students often complained about the "indifferent masses" who, in contrast to the élite Ustasha students, had selfish aspirations and "a head full of limitless possibilities."⁸⁰ Gradually, this attitude changed and increasing numbers of students turned against the regime. However, it was not fecklessness or selfishness which was responsible for the estrangement of students but rather the manner in which the Ustashes treated them. For all their talk of students as the avant-garde of the revolution, they did not respect their opinions much. After the euphoria of the national revolution, Ustasha student leaders began to detect a creeping spirit of ennui and emptiness. After an initial period in which students had left their studies to join the war of liberation, many had returned to their books "to compensate for what they had lost during the war. At the university a lull is felt."⁸¹ For all their threats, Ustasha student camps were not well attended and the new Ustasha student societies and their journals were not very popular. Noting sadly that students only turned up when some well-known personality was giving a lecture, one newspaper called for a new direction and new content which would "fill the emptiness felt by students after their victory."⁸² Yet, despite acknowledging that a problem existed, state ideologues and student activists could offer few solutions. Student leaders did complain that due to the military service they were required to perform their studies were suffering. One student, Zlatko Majtin, argued that a solution to the problem was for university departments to retain contact with students whilst they were performing their military exercises and exams so they could return to university after the war, otherwise students not finishing their exams would represent a "great loss for the Croatian people." Another factor, he argued, hampering students finishing their studies was the general war situation and the enormous social and economic problems associated with it. Answering the complaints of some of the less-educated Ustasha activists who, after all, represented the rank and file of the armed forces, he denied that in Croatia there

was an “over production of intelligentsia.”⁸³ His was not a solitary complaint. Zdravko Brajković, another nationalist student, argued that it “shouldn’t be a source of contentment” that today’s student was abandoning his “cherished books and seminars” for the battlefield, expected to choose between his duties as a warrior and a student. No matter how “daring and persistent” he was as a soldier, for Brajković the solution was simple: “Without delay, he should be returned from the battlefield to study and learning.”⁸⁴ However, it was only at the beginning of 1944 that students serving in the civil service and the army were allowed to take a sabbatical to complete their studies, apparently because the State was suffering from a lack of doctors, lawyers and young intellectuals.⁸⁵

Nonetheless, the ennui and resignation of Croatian students does not imply that most or all students had abandoned the concept of an independent state or had begun to openly rebel against the Ustasha authorities. Nor does it mean that nationalist students had abandoned their radical activism. In fact, it is arguable that, as the position of the State became more precarious, the attitude of mobilised students became more radical and uncompromising. In 1944, for example, following the assassination of the Domobran commander, Franjo Šimić, students at the University of Zagreb released a leaflet which demanded the government proceed with “the ruthless and merciless liquidation of the Chetniks who wade gleefully in holy Croat blood.” For them, they were indistinguishable from the cut-throat Partisans and they demanded death for both groups. For them, Croatdom and Serbdom could not co-exist.⁸⁶ Yet, the significant number of students who did support the regime were beginning to think beyond the ecstasy of the revolution to the future society they wished to live in which meant looking at the faults, as well as strengths, of Ustasha society. In April 1944, nationalist students at the University of Zagreb held their inaugural conference, the aim of which was to express solidarity with the Ustasha Movement and rally sympathetic students. The Conference, which included a midnight oath to the Poglavnik and which was opened by a student on military duty, Ivica Krilić, was attended by only the most uncompromising and fanatical student supporters of the regime. Student speaker after student speaker stood up to announce that they would

never reconcile with the “great Serb enemy who wants to carry the insane and repulsive idea of Yugoslavism across the pastures of graves and the bloody Foča Bridge.” Instead, they lauded the values of the Croat race, the “shining possibilities of our development, politically and culturally.”⁸⁷ They had a warning for those students who did not want to be committed to the national cause. “Those who stand aside or who are intellectually immature and racially bloodless, lacking in diligence or who are corrupted and suitably scornful of chastisement will be punished.”⁸⁸ The climax of the Conference, a student resolution which reaffirmed the loyalty of university youth to the State and the Movement, condemned Jews, Serbs and stated that Croatian “biological survival” was only possible in a Croat state.⁸⁹

Yet the Congress of Ustasha students also suggested incipient rebellion. Although the press quite justifiably promoted it as a manifestation of the loyalty of university students to the state, which it was, the message was ambiguous. Whereas the student speakers all proclaimed their allegiance to the State and the Movement, student commissars like Milivoj Karamarko also called for a State which would respect all religions and in which lands such as Bosnia would not be treated like colonies. Karamarko himself advocated a Balkan federation with Croatia positioned as part of the leading block of Danubian-Dinaric nations which would include Montenegro, Albania and Slovenia. Lest any Ustasha veteran object to this message, he pointed out that not only were students free from prejudice, preconceptions and the burdens of the past, but they were also gradually assuming the leadership of the armed forces and would one day assume the leadership of the State itself.⁹⁰ At the same time, conscious that they would one day be the leaders of the Croatian state, he called for an end to all manifestations of corruption in the state, which would have to be “destroyed at its root without mercy.”⁹¹

Four days later, expanding on his theme, Karamarko stated that the task of students was to help create a “Croatian people’s socialist society and mercilessly liquidate the appearance of all native Jewry and capitalism, people and groups who consider themselves bearers of some new form of political leadership and

anti-state speculation.”⁹² The Poglavnik declared himself pleased with the Resolution, calling it an expression of “sobriety, seriousness and an Ustasha expression of decisiveness!” However, underneath there were serious tensions. In April 1944, a student club in Vienna, the August Šenoa Club (later Croaticae Academicae) published a resolution with essentially the same message as the Ustasha students’ Resolution, except that it went further. Whilst lauding the Ustasha movement as the saviour of the Croatian nation and condemning Serbs, Jews and Bolsheviks as “political” people, it also called for an integral Croatia in which all Croatians irrespective of their ethnic and religious affiliation, would be equal. It condemned the actions of some politicians which, it argued, were contributing to the demise of the state. It also claimed that Croatia was not exclusively Western and had benefited from eastern influences; it suggested the creation of a Balkan federation as the student Resolution had. In this vision, Croatia was not a wall or a dividing line between the East and West, but rather a bridge: “The Croatia of yesterday was a living wound of world conflicts. The Croatia of tomorrow will be a symphony of their reconciliation. East and West, North and South never anywhere experienced such a collision as in the Croatian soul—now their followers must achieve complete harmony in it. This is the mission of Croatia.”⁹³

Although the resolution did not reject the Independent State of Croatia, far less Ustasha rule, this was too much for the Ustasha commissars. Franjo Nevistić replied testily that the pre-revolutionary generation of Croatian nationalist students had not had time for such frivolous notions since *they* had been busy fighting for Croatia’s right to independence.⁹⁴ The extreme displeasure of Ustasha commissars towards the Vienna Resolution was partly grounded in the fact that it seemed to be destroying so many Ustasha sacred cows. The student committee which released the proclamation stated explicitly that they wished to attract students from all three faiths and went as far as to argue that the concept of the “Serb” was disappearing just as the concept of the “Turk” and the “Latin” had disappeared before it. More importantly, it declared that “Croat Orthodoxy strengthens the Slavic freshness of Croatia.” It concluded that “harmony on

the basis of equality” was a “merciless diktat” and whoever betrayed it also betrayed Croatia.⁹⁵ Such views were not the preserve of an isolated minority. Otherwise uncompromising Ustasha students lauded the Resolution as the basis of a “radical statist and nationalist programme.”⁹⁶ Many nationalist students reacted to the ongoing civil war in their State by advocating an integrationalist national policy in much the same way as the Young Croats had at the turn of the century. Thus, although the Ustasha Movement was still seen as “an incendiary bomb of nationalistic spirit,” it was also interpreted as a nationally unifying force which advocated harmony and brotherhood.⁹⁷

Lest it be forgotten, this was a new generation which had been educated in an independent Croatia and thus its outlook, so its leaders argued, was bound to be different. Milivoj Karamarko argued that his generation had to be listened to. For him and others like him, Croatia could no longer be “closed, cramped or uniform” but rather it had to be a “multi-faceted and complex synthesis.” He also believed that the Ustasha Movement had to be remade, in his words, as a more activist and principled organisation. He believed that Croatia was not only both culturally and politically positioned in the Balkans, but also absolutely Slav. “This generation is nationally integrated, culturally synthesised and politically state-constructed...the prospects of the State can only be achieved with its determined and active involvement in the circle of Balkan nations,” he wrote.⁹⁸ At the same time, he warned that those who would not “throw off the ballast of decayed ideas and decayed politics” could expect neither “respect, peace nor comradeship.”⁹⁹

Karamarko’s requests were in vain; the Ustasha regime certainly did not listen to the political opinions of mobilised students and appeared to have little interest in their ideas about the evolution of Ustasha society. To add to this sense of frustration and alienation, student culture too was mired in nostalgia for the era of the Ustasha struggle of the 1930s. In contrast to most revolutionary societies, there were few, if any, literary works which dealt with student life as it was in the new state. Plays and books, even ones written after 1941, addressed only the struggles of the inter-war generation of students. The books of Skračić and Milković and agitprop plays, such as Franjo Babić’s, *Novo pokoljenje* (The New

Generation, 1942) with their narratives of nationalist students fighting an oppressive Serb regime, might have been period pieces so distant were they from the current generation of students struggling with more mundane problems such as military conscription and chronic food shortages. In fact, due to its mythology of 1930s student radicalism, the one youth group Babić's agitprop play did become popular with was the Ustasha youth in Osijek where Babić set it. Still young enough not to have experienced the reality of student life, it nevertheless spoke to them about the pivotal role of youth in the revolution and they performed it in public on a number of occasions.¹⁰⁰ However, for current Ustasha students who wanted to build the new society, it was a literary symbol of everything they found most frustrating; a conservative older generation which was thwarting their radical idealism and demanded the right to rule based on their sacrifices made in an era freshmen and women could barely remember but whose iconography was constantly imposed on them.

By contrast, a dynamic new youth movement under the leadership of the Communist Party was building momentum. As the collapse of the Croatian state approached, Ustasha student leaders were reduced to asking for the support of all students, whether they were Ustashes or not: "We do not want to make formal Ustashes," the student commissar, Nevistić, insisted. "For everyone who wants to collaborate with us there is an open door if they accept [our] values, not as the values of a special ideology or a special group, but as the inevitable values of the Croatian people."¹⁰¹ However, Nevistić was a veteran of the student conflicts of the 1930s: thus he was a representative of an older generation of students whose time had come and gone. By 1945, it was too late. Croatian university youth had changed: from Yugoslavism to Croatianism and back again.

*"We are the Descendants of Wolves and Lions!" The Militant Rhetoric of
Ustasha Youth*

In contrast to the ennui at university, the Ustasha Youth organisation was full of élan and spirit. For the Ustashas, their revolution was indeed a revolution of youth. According to the Poglavnik himself, to be an Ustasha meant to be eternally young,¹⁰² and in the Croatian Sabor, a seat was specially reserved for an Ustasha Youth representative.¹⁰³ The Ustashas saw youth not so much in terms of age as in attitude. While they were the heralds of violence, militancy and mercilessness to national enemies, the outdated mentality of the older generation included such principles as “pacifism, compromise and treachery.”¹⁰⁴ The fixation with youth was not merely rhetoric and reflected the fact that high-school pupils, perhaps even more than university students, had played an integral role in the revolution of 1941. In Bjelovar, for example, in co-operation with the town mayor, Julije Makanec, and Croatian soldiers, they had disarmed a unit of the Yugoslav Army.¹⁰⁵ Before this, in the last years of Yugoslavia, high-school students had formed clandestine Ustasha organisations. Nationalist youths expected that with the accession of the Ustashas, the days of their persecution for their political beliefs were over. One typical article proclaimed that the time was past when “our beloved Ustasha high-school students were ridiculed by various Dokićes, Lazars, Samuels and so on. The time is past when we were accused of being anti-state elements who provoked only ‘disorder’ amongst our class colleagues.” Instead, a new era had arrived and “high-school nationalists carrying out their duties are tasting the first fruits of their labour.”¹⁰⁶ Joining the Ustasha Youth presented an opportunity for youthful rebellion. The Ustasha Youth prided themselves on their lack of bourgeois propriety and respect for the older generation. This was reflected in their extreme rhetoric: “We, the Ustasha Youth,” declared one typically bombastic statement, “and also those youth who fell in the first year of the state are most horribly accused. And while our elders accuse us, they have carried out deeds which one could rightly call misdeeds.” These misdeeds included persisting “with the farce of some kind of brotherhood with our oppressors...under the cloak of equality and freedom they plundered everything that was Croatian and threw into the mud everything that was

national. Looking at the betrayal of many of our elders, our young hearts ail and disappointment strikes our young souls.” By contrast, the Ustasha Youth, so they believed, possessed “*élan*, spirit and the will to struggle for justice and the life of our nation.” Therefore, “it is more than truthful to say that those who do not help us are committing the worst national treachery!”¹⁰⁷

Like nationalist university students, the Ustasha Youth also saw themselves as the conscience of the Movement and were determined not to be ignored. While they most definitely saw themselves as the children of the Poglavnik, their loyalty was not to be taken for granted and they were definitely not content to sit in the shadows. They expected high standards not only of themselves but also of their leaders. Franjo Turbuha, an Ustasha Youth leader, for example, argued that it was better to have five exemplary Ustasha Youth in a region, than numerous Ustasha Youths who could not live up to the Movement’s principles.¹⁰⁸ Ustasha youths also often admonished the Ustasha leadership not to succumb to the temptations of speculation and capitalism and personal profit. Anyone, “from ministers or *župans* to functionaries to soldiers,” lost the right to serve the state if they compromised their anti-capitalist ideals, because speculators and the power-hungry were “the most dangerous enemies of the state!” Therefore, only idealists could hold positions of responsibility and power. The leaders of the youth movement sometimes warned that “a small-town and *petit bourgeois*” atmosphere was threatening to affect even the Ustasha movement.¹⁰⁹ This fear appears to have begun quite soon after the founding of the State. Branimir Rogić, as early as January 1942, was complaining about the conduct of certain Ustashas for whom their “pouch” was their only concern. While he blamed the “mediocre and uncultivated,” the products of the Yugoslav educational system as well as “bourgeois selfishness” for bringing the good name of the Ustashas into disrepute, he acknowledged that even some Ustashas who had fought bravely in battle had succumbed to such vices.¹¹⁰

The Ustasha Youth were also uncompromising in the language they used against the enemies of the State: for them, there was no talk of Balkan federations and the equality of religions as there was for university students. On the contrary,

they vowed to lead a merciless war of destruction against those who challenged the authority of the Ustashas and justified their settling of accounts with the “cowards, freaks and traitors” by recalling the way such people had assisted Belgrade’s persecution of them. The “fierce, rebellious and militant” peasant youth which had come to the city to make the Croatian race young and refresh the cities would call to account all those who had portrayed them as “roving bandits, murderers and looters.”¹¹¹ Grga Pejnović, a theorist of the Ustasha Youth, used a similar rationale. Serbs, Jews and gypsies by disrespecting Croatia’s aspirations for independence in the past, had to “disappear” before the rights of the nation. The same applied to all those who worked only for personal gain and not for the profit of the nation. The Ustasha Youth kept vigil over the moral worth of the nation and would howl “like a wolf” at anyone who attempted to besmirch its moral virtue.¹¹² This nationalist militancy was reflected in the poems they wrote and sent to newspapers in the hope of publication. In one, Mustafa Gaća, a Sarajevo high-school student, wrote: “Jews are the greatest bandits/but they will pay dearly./ No more will Leon Finci/ in his bookshop sit in a chair.”¹¹³ Clearly, the Ustasha youth did not respect decorous or polite values. On the contrary, they saw themselves as the descendants of wolves and lions and, as such, they disdained “pacifism, selfishness and indifference” which they aimed to suffocate. They argued that throughout their history, Croats – from the Uskok pirates to Matija Gubec through Eugen Kvaternik - had been rebellious and that they too as children in whom the same “rebellious revolutionary” blood flowed were insurrectionary too.¹¹⁴ At other times, they were representatives of a “rugged Dinaric race” of “frontiersman, piratical and Ustasha blood.” Whatever the case, it was clear that Ustasha Youths yearned to emulate their “warlike ancestors” and be the “executors” of their enemies.¹¹⁵

Yet the Ustasha youth in deeds as well as words lived up to their combative image. Although Communist historians often liked to portray the Ustasha youth as the obedient servants of the Ustasha regime, this was not always the case. In fact, the members of the Ustasha Youth often acted with a belligerence and radicalism which unsettled their elders. Certainly, members of the German high

command such as Glaise von Horstenau learnt to be wary of them after being surrounded by five hundred angry youth members of the Ustasha Movement in Crkveni Bok en route to investigate allegations of Ustasha war crimes in the region. The Ustasha Youth also launched a war against immoral books and “penny dreadfuls, run-of-the-mill trash, pornography with the most bestial and banal contents” which it claimed were inciting children to become “robbers, thieves and immoral people” like the heroes of these stories.¹¹⁶ Inspired by this, Ustasha Youth in Ogulin, on their own initiative, confiscated books and journals which propagated an anti-Croatian spirit, in particular “pornographic” and “Marxist” books.¹¹⁷ However, sometimes their revolutionary zeal was not so welcome to the Ustasha hierarchy. Thus, Ustasha youths were chided by Ustasha officials for treating Ustasha institutions such as the National Defence units as if they were the exclusive preserve of the young.¹¹⁸ Like other youths, their members were caught smoking in cinemas or showing films at their cinematic club which had been banned by the authorities.¹¹⁹ Ustasha camps did not always agree amongst themselves and sometimes one local youth camp would accuse the leaders of a neighbouring one of committing ideological transgressions and revolutionary mistakes.¹²⁰ Nor did Ustasha youth always obey their national leaders and, sometimes, they had the upper hand. For example, when Franjo Trbuha, a youth adjutant, proposed that former enemies of the their Movement be forgiven for past transgressions and be allowed to join the Ustasha youth, reminding them that the new Croatia was a state for all Croatians, he received short shrift and was compelled to write a second article ordering members of the youth organisations to follow the line of the leadership and act more tolerantly.¹²¹

By all accounts, many Ustasha youths fought heroically for their beliefs and the youth movement created a number of youthful martyrs. Zdenko Blažeković wrote that Ustasha youths were guided by the graves of dead comrades and it is certainly the case that over time being a member of the Ustasha Youth became an increasingly perilous choice as its members perished at the hands of the Partisans and the Chetniks.¹²² One of the most celebrated incidents occurred in Bihać in April 1943 when seven local Ustasha youths were executed by an “occupying”

detachment of Partisans allegedly for refusing to recant their nationalist principles. According to the official report of their death, like all Ustashas, they had awaited their deaths bravely, enduring torture and humiliation without complaint.¹²³ That two of the youths, Jusuf Županović and Ivan Janković, were best friends and of different faiths simply added poignancy to the story. “Once more there was an expression of brotherhood of Muslims and Catholics. Jusuf and Ivan saw in the final moments that Providence had ordered for them the same fate. They raised their right fists. They kissed each other but they did not cry.” After their execution, their bodies were even thrown into the same grave.¹²⁴ Young female Ustasha youths were also elevated to heroic status. The national and youth press not only lauded Andjelka Šarić and Jelena Šantić for their brave conduct before their deaths at the hands of the Partisans in the Kozara Mountains in 1943, but also dwelt on the sadistic nature of the torture – including the humiliation for Šarić of having the letter *U* carved into her flesh.¹²⁵ The deaths of Ustasha youths in battle and at the hands of ideological enemies, though no doubt exaggerated, was a fairly common experience. Despite the valedictory obituaries, however, a certain weariness and despondency at the deaths of so many fallen class comrades became evident in youth journals and private letters. As Milenko Barbarić wrote to his friend, Omer Jahić, who had died in battle as an Ustasha soldier in 1944:

Could you ever imagine that when we sat on the rails of the promenade in Mostar and quietly hummed the latest songs, that I would one day write this posthumous letter, our Omer! Could we ever imagine that we would be able to see your ever-clear face one day only in pictures and remember it only in memories! But the laws of fate and the dictates of Providence are merciless and we cannot negate them.¹²⁶

Ustasha Heroes: Life in the Ustasha Youth Movement

The Ustashas believed that they were creating a new kind of youth for the new era. According to Zdenko Blažeković, the new youth would be educated in the virtues of “gallantry, militancy, honour, self-reliance, moral strength, ethical thinking.” Like the ancient Greek, he would have a healthy mind and a healthy body and he would spend his time “in the countryside and the fresh air.” By travelling around the countryside, the Ustasha youth would learn to know the beauty of his nation and national culture more intimately.¹²⁷ Blažeković defined the Ustasha Youth organisation as a secular movement whose job was to promote “the brotherly co-operation and mutual life” of peasant, working-class and intellectual youth in Croatia. It would go to the villages and rescue village youth from falling under “anti-national tastes” and instead make them the guardian of all national songs, poems, clothes and customs. It would also enter the factories and make a community out of working-class youths poisoned by “Jewish-Bolshevik ideas.” Finally, intellectual youth would have to abjure “all notions of privilege, adventurism and snobbery” and meet peasant and working-class youth after school. In such a way, a new generation, free from class and social conflict and worthy to be the inheritors of the Ustashas’ mantle, would be created.¹²⁸ For Stjepan Birac, a clericalist writer, “young Croat soldiers, those élite young sons of Croatia,” should be the role model for youths. Only by following their example could the State hope to create a new healthy generation free from the “filthy stinking perverted” ideas of the past.¹²⁹

To achieve their aim of creating a new youth, the Ustashas founded youth schools throughout the State. Each school concentrated on a particular skill or aptitude the Ustashas thought worthy of cultivating (such as performing arts) or targeted admission to a particular social group, such as working-class and peasant youth. At the same time, the Ustashas also established training schools for the leaders of regional youth battalions and courses, which could last as long as two months, were targeted to the separate social classes of Ustasha Youth. Through the duration of the course, students learnt various skills and subjects: the history of Croatia and its liberation struggle; the ideology of the Ustasha Movement; political science; music and sports. These schools also encouraged a

spirit of camaraderie not only amongst students, but also amongst students and their course instructors. However, the main focus of these schools was on military training. One educational ideologue wrote that “the most sacred moment for our course attendee is when he is given a gun for the first time....his eyes shine with pride and joy. With how much reverence and respect he accepts it in his hands and how much in his own eyes visibly grows that feeling that he has something which cannot be taught, something that he must have in his blood.”¹³⁰

The Ustasha Youth training schools were designed to serve as a pedagogical preparation for military life and youths went straight from the training schools to the Movement’s elite paramilitary units and death squads, especially the Poglavnik Personal Bodyguard.¹³¹ For others, becoming a regional youth leader was an end in itself since in becoming a camp or cell leader young people suddenly found themselves with a level of power and influence they had never experienced before. Youth in the Ustasha Movement were arranged in camps and cells just as adult Ustashes were. In order to command young Ustashes, they too had to be educated as they had to be people in whom an Ustasha youth could have complete faith. As well as being a “model of authority,” the young cell leader had to be “a fanatic of Ustasha ideas,” a “paragon in his private life” and “unyielding where it concerns the [Ustasha] Principles.”¹³² Being a cell leader, for instance, was an important and responsible position. He was to teach young Ustashes how to behave at camp and at home and how to conduct themselves in the company of schoolmates. When members erred, he should be firm enough to show them the errors of their way, but not shout at them. The Ustasha leader was also to consider what he could have done differently when problems arose. The cell leader, it was advised, must live with his cell as “brothers” inside and outside the camp and consider them “your greatest duty, your greatest desire, your only thought.” If he worked hard and there were negative results then “be sure that you have erred somewhere.”¹³³

The youths who joined the Movement could have been under no illusions about how serious their undertaking was. Even the youngest members were taught that they must be “apostles” and “fanatics of the Ustasha religion” ready to destroy

their enemies in a battle of “arms and blood.” They were also often reminded that the Ustasha revolution was unfinished and that, if necessary, they too would be called upon to place their lives “on the altar of the Homeland and from our bones build its foundations.”¹³⁴ This desire to turn children into warriors was not an ad hoc policy determined by a lack of manpower: it was a guiding philosophy of the Movement. Rudolf Pavlek, a leader of the Starčević Youth, argued as early as 1942 that the worth of the new generation would be measured by their military prowess. If the Movement wished to secure their Homeland and create a State based on “social justice,” devoid of “parasitism and robbery” then the military training of the young was a matter of urgency.¹³⁵ For Ivo Babić, a young member of the élite Poglavnik Bodyguard, the ancient civilisations of Athens and Sparta provided their own salutary lessons: the Spartans, he pointed out, had raised their children in a warlike fashion from the earliest age and this had given them eternal life, whereas Athens’ decline could be traced to the superseding of the masculine principle by the rule of the Ephebes. He argued that all revolutionary societies including Revolutionary France and Bolshevik Russia had had legions of child warriors and so should revolutionary Croatia too. The creation of child legions would also have the benefit of making youths into model men by teaching them the values of comradely love and face-to-face fighting.¹³⁶

The militarisation of youths and the glorification of warfare was reflected in the youth journals and in particular the kinds of poems and stories written for them and which, on occasion, they wrote themselves. The spectre of death and violence was ever present. In one anthology of Ustasha Youth poetry, the editor wrote of how the young writers from the Požega Ustasha camp yearned for the memories of childhood because in the present “they feel the melancholy of autumn.” Other Ustasha youth poems discussed the grim reality of being a soldier and dying alone on the battlefield or imagined the painful death throes of the Ustasha youth. Ustasha youth poems were also dedicated to fallen comrades from the youth movement or militant warriors such as Mijo Babić.¹³⁷ However, some poems seemed to positively look forward to the moment of death comparing it to a dear brother or gentle mother: “We look it straight in the eyes? Because Death is only

the reverse of life.” Alternatively, they wrote of death as a living thing, talking of its hands “in whose presence souls tremble.” However, the fear stopped as soon as they “stormed and shot/ chasing the fresh traces of the enemy. And we knew, we felt/ that with them, death had fled from us!”¹³⁸ By contrast, the adult, Andrija Ilić, wrote some advice for Ustasha youths which was suitably stern for such unforgiving times: “Don’t cry like a woman/ because everything that ails you/ is short and passes/ like a shadow. It’s not manly to cry/ but to shout. Yes, remember./ Shout./ Roar./ Bellow./ Endure./ Fall/ and get up again/ like a man!”¹³⁹

This sense of danger and peril inspired a close feeling of camaraderie in camp and young Ustashes formed intense bonds with their leaders who often became surrogate brothers and fathers. The journals and newsletters of individual Ustasha Youth camps, which were not subject to central censorship, demonstrate the fact that the relationship between camp leaders and Ustasha youth could become extremely powerful. When the camp leader Franjo Bušić left the Ustasha Youth camp of Mitrovica to go and work in Zagreb, there was genuine sadness at his farewell presentation: “Our eyes were glassy and we scarcely held back our tears. We couldn’t believe that our Buša was leaving us and we would have to work alone.”¹⁴⁰ The departure of Franjo Bušić for Zagreb, probably at the request of the central Ustasha authorities, reflected the fact that the Ustasha Youth schools and clubs gave its brightest and best members a unique opportunity for social mobility. In addition, the list of activities Ustasha youths were able to enjoy were extensive: there were annual sports and athletics events, chess competitions, motorbike racing and flying lessons. Ustasha Youth members could also develop their artistic aspirations and at their specialist schools they could learn ballet, acting and film-making from the cream of the State’s talents, many of whom, such as the actor Armand Alliger and the ballet dancers, Oskar Harnoš and Ana Roje, were tenured teachers at the youth academies.¹⁴¹ Indeed, many of the young athletes, writers and actors who received their formative education in the youth organisation of the Ustasha Movement would later become major artistic personalities in Communist Yugoslavia, amongst them the writer Ivan Raos, the

critic Miroslav Vaupotić and the historian Duško Kečkemet. The talented young poet, Dražen Panjkota, who wrote eulogies to his idol, Federico Garcia Lorca as well as the Poglavnik, although not formally a member of the Ustasha youth, was embraced by them as a kind of artistic spokesman. His first collection of poetry, *Ustap u magli* (A Step in the Fog, 1942) received a rapturous reception in the pages of their journals, with one critic calling him the “greatest poet among our younger generation,” adding that there was more poetry and soul in his poems than in any other poet in Croatia.¹⁴² Perhaps because of their emphasis on arguably ephemeral subjects such as theatre studies and ballet, Ustasha Youth artistic schools became a target for the resentment of less well-educated hardened Ustashas who viewed the youths who visited these academies as cosseted and privileged show-offs. In October 1942, for example, two drunk members of the Poglavnik Bodyguard, Zvonimir Brekalo and Ante Crna, burst into an Ustasha Youth dancing class, swore at the students and abused them, calling them traitors who could enjoy frivolous pursuits while their comrades were dying on the battlefield. How common such incidents were is not clear. However, it is hard to disagree with the official at the Bureau of Propaganda who commented that such incidents “hardly contribute to our propaganda efforts.”¹⁴³

The attack on the supposed bourgeois proclivities of its youth movement would have come as a surprise to Ustasha leaders, whose journals constantly emphasised the working-class roots as well as peasant roots of nationalist youth. Indeed, they often pointed to the village and small-town origins of the new generation of young nationalist activists who had led the ideological and physical resistance to the bourgeois Yugoslav regime as evidence of the purity of the revolution. Since they were revolutionaries, living in privilege was out of the question. In the ranks of nationalist students and young Ustasha intellectuals, they boasted, “there was not one spoilt child from the rich upper-class milieu.”¹⁴⁴ The nationalist youth press made iconic martyrs of two of the Movement’s most valorous young proletarian heroes, Matija Soldin and Marko Hranilović, who had not only been activists in a banned working-class nationalist organisation and amongst the first members of the Ustasha Movement, but were also hanged in

1931 for their part in an Ustasha assassination, remaining defiant until the last.¹⁴⁵ For some, the inter-war Ustasha Movement had really been just a movement of working-class youths, coming home from hours of toil in the factories to distribute illegal propaganda leaflets.¹⁴⁶ The Ustashas argued that in Yugoslavia, Croatian youth had been systematically ignored and mistreated. They painted a miserable picture of the young in 1920s and 1930s Croatia, left to their own fate by an uncaring society. "No one cared about us. We were left to grow up on the streets, we wandered around the dark alleys and railway stations. People said we were beggars, good-for-nothings and thieves and they scorned and avoided us."¹⁴⁷ The Ustashas portrayed their Movement as the salvation of these youths, rescuing them from moral danger and destitution and providing them with pride, an ethical education and discipline as well as a uniform and a gun. Countless stories in youth journals depicted the transformation of an indolent ambivalent street child into a proud and idealistic leader of an Ustasha youth cell.¹⁴⁸ According to the Ustashas, the former Yugoslavia had not only excluded working-class youth from involvement in society, it had also poisoned their heads with "sick dreams," creating a "mediocre" generation of toiling masses. The problems of working-class youth could be traced back to the former "inhumane" capitalist movement which had exploited the proletariat youth and made its life unbearable in every way.¹⁴⁹

The Ustashas aimed to return working-class youth to real Croatian values and, at the same time, elevate it through education, self-help and social support. The Ustashas would build a new kind of worker, a working-class "pioneer," who would not be educated by the importing of "distorted culture and morals," but through actively seeking to educate himself, attaining an Ustasha consciousness which would be passed onto others. Young working-class Ustasha leaders were sent to set up cells in factories of the Ustasha movement to educate new generations of Ustasha proletariat youth. However, working-class youths do seem to have benefited in more practical ways. A law of 30 April 1941, for instance, sought to protect young workers from exploitative employers by strictly controlling the number of hours apprentices could work, especially at night.

Ustasha commissars were also obliged to inspect factories and businesses to ensure the premises were safe. When it became clear that this law was not being adhered to, a new law was introduced in 1942 invoking stiff financial penalties for violation of the conditions of apprentice employment. In addition, a Bureau for the Protection of Working-Class Youth within the Commissariat of the Ustasha Youth was also founded to advise on new laws affecting working-class youth.¹⁵⁰

For some working-class youths, the Ustashes had returned to the toiling masses their pride and honour. Proletariat Ustasha youths like Ivica Lučić, who saw themselves as working-class warriors, vowed to inspire all blue-collar youths in factories and work places to become Ustashes, proving that working-class youth stood unshakeably by the Poglavnik. "Working-class youth," he concluded, "after years of indolence has received legal permission to work and become an equal member of the Croat national community. Working on the foundation of Croat nationalism and Croat state blood, working-class youth will always be, as it is now, for the homeland prepared!"¹⁵¹

Although camps were an important facet of the life of mobilised youth, there are few reliable accounts of what life in them was like. We do know that Serb children who had been converted to Catholicism joined Ustasha Youth camps since one of the few accounts of life in the camps was written by a converted Serb¹⁵²; other than this, little has been written about childhood in wartime Croatia. Therefore, most of our information about the camps has to come from the Ustasha Youth's own journals as well as the State media which idealised them. As a dynamic movement of action, the Ustashes believed that the authentic youth educational experience was to be found in the camps. Julije Makanec, an Ustasha pedagogic ideologue, argued that while at camps, youth could learn Ustasha theory, singing, team sports as well as skills such as cooking and first aid, the best life lessons future Ustasha functionaries could learn were "through discussions during excursions in the countryside." In reports of training courses at campsites newspapers painted an idyllic image of days filled with healthy physical exercise, communal singing on marches into the wood and evenings around the campfire where youths bonded, confessed their troubles, sang songs and "demonstrated

their love towards their commanders.” The camp fire, as one young enthusiastic camp member explained, was the most beautiful aspect of camp life as it was around the fire that all hierarchy ceased and everyone, regardless of their rank, sat together.¹⁵³ It is very unlikely that life in regular youth camps was as idyllic as this. As we shall see, youth leaders frequently lost their temper with their young charges. As a young member of a camp, there was also no illusion about who was in charge. The camp was strictly hierarchical and the commands of the camp sergeant were gospel. The timetable of activity was strictly worked out by him. Despite this seemingly strict regimentation, not only were youths at camp prone to disobedience but they also behaved in a rebellious manner towards teachers and parents. Sometimes, there was real resentment at having to give up time after school to attend camp. As one cell leader grumbled:

You complain when a meeting carries on after 5pm and you cannot go to the cinema. You cannot sacrifice two hours in the week to build your Homeland, and have you never thought that your brothers and fathers now with a rifle in their hands stand firm in the defence of eternal Croatia and could at any moment be blown apart by a cannonball. They give the most precious thing- their life – for the Homeland and you cannot even spare two hours a week!¹⁵⁴

However, surviving copies of local youth camps suggest that they were also a lot of fun. Apart from all the activities that one could participate in, from poetry writing to sport, there were also excursions to the countryside or coast, competitions to enter, prizes to be won and dreams of an intrepid future as an Ustasha hero or daredevil pilot to foster. Moreover, if the Ustasha Hero youth camp at Hrvatska Mitrovica and its leader, Valodja Rasjin, were representative, then there was clearly a great deal of camaraderie between members and their leaders. In their newspaper, there were endless jokes about each other and their leader interspersed with exhortations to camp members to behave. Rasjin might have been a strict camp sergeant but he was also prepared to be the butt of jokes and ridiculous caricatures if it helped to aid a feeling of brotherhood and solidarity.¹⁵⁵

CONCLUSION

Despite their rhetoric and propaganda, the youth wing of the Ustasha Movement did not succeed in winning the support of the majority of Croatian youth. Indeed, as the Independent State of Croatia disintegrated, even Ustasha youth leaders abandoned the Movement and joined the resistance. Despite the fact that they never became a mass mobilised movement of the young, the Ustasha youth were never quite the small marginal adolescent auxiliaries their opponents argued they were; nor were they an exclusive society of golden élite youth some Ustasha youth believed themselves to be or even aspired to become. As with the Movement itself, support tended to be regionally-based. In areas such as Dalmatia, support for the Ustashas, once strong amongst high-school and Catholic youth, quickly declined following the ceding of the entire region to Italian control. By contrast, enthusiasm for the youth organisations of the Ustasha Movement remained solid until 1945 in areas such as the Lika, Western Hercegovina and small towns like Gospić and Vukovar. Increasingly, though, the spirit of rebelliousness which the Ustashas had invoked against the Yugoslav regime was turned against the Movement itself. Prior to 1941, many Croatian youths and students had been attracted to the Ustasha Movement by its chiliastic fervour, its uncompromising apocalyptic tone, its utopian vision of a world in which national and societal relationships would be transformed. Once in power, however, authoritarianism and stagnation set in. Very quickly, except in a rhetorical sense, the Ustasha Movement became conservative. Its agenda of compromise with the Serb minority, no matter how insincere it was, as well as its political subservience to the occupationist powers (which included the creation of that most conservative of institutions, a dynastic royal family) in order to simply maintain what little of their State they still controlled was an important factor in the decline of their popularity amongst the young, although obviously not the only reason. The

Partisans of Croatia, by contrast, embraced both Croatian nationalism (if not chauvinism) as well as a socially radical agenda. Unlike the Ustashas, their apocalyptic language was matched by their principles. For many youths coming to maturity in the Independent State of Croatia, memories of old Yugoslavia were dim and distant while those youths who remained loyal to the Ustasha cause tended to be older: youth leaders and instructors who had been students in royalist Yugoslavia and had bitter memories of their experiences. For most youth, the spectre of a Yugoslavia in which the Croat nation would be enslaved was not reason enough to continue supporting the Ustasha Movement. With the collapse of Nazi Germany and the rise of the Partisans, Croatian youths, like the Young Croats before them, had transformed themselves from integral Croats into integral Yugoslavs without changing their opinions at all. Plus ça change.

NOTES

- ¹ Künz (1990), 53.
- ² Studies include Koch (1975) and Koon (1985).
- ³ Mosse (1966), 18-21, Koon (1985), xv-xxi, Bubarić (1942), 88-91.
- ⁴ Schneider (1928), 228.
- ⁵ See, for example, Livezeanu (1995), Jarausch (1982).
- ⁶ See, for example, Livezeanu (1995), 211-43.
- ⁷ Beschnitt (1980), 226-7.
- ⁸ Gross (1963-1964), 86. See also Zaninović (1958-9), 65-102.
- ⁹ Gross (1963-64) 86.
- ¹⁰ Gross (1963-64), 119.
- ¹¹ Gross (1963-64), 131.
- ¹² Beschnitt (1980), 210.
- ¹³ Beschnitt (1980), 228.
- ¹⁴ Beschnitt (1980), 228.
- ¹⁵ Beschnitt (1980), 382, n. 598.
- ¹⁶ Ujević (1965), 71-3.
- ¹⁷ Vošnjak (1928), 4, 120.
- ¹⁸ Vošnjak (1928), 120.
- ¹⁹ Žutić (1991), 91-2.
- ²⁰ Gligorijević (1963), 315-393.
- ²¹ Bartulović (1924), 125-29.
- ²² Žimbrek (1923), 406.
- ²³ Rajčević (1959), 9-39.
- ²⁴ Bičanić (1936), 12-33.
- ²⁵ Jakšić (1936), 1022-4.
- ²⁶ Pružić (1936), 648-52.
- ²⁷ Djilas (1973), 55.
- ²⁸ Žutić (1991), 21.
- ²⁹ Žutić (1991), 90.
- ³⁰ Rajčević (1980), 115-207.
- ³¹ Bzik (1929), 95-101.
- ³² *Hrvatski domobran*, 16 November 1928.
- ³³ *Starčević*, 2 October 1928, *Starčević*, August 1928.
- ³⁴ *Starčević*, February 1928.
- ³⁵ *Starčević*, 2 October 1928.

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- ³⁶ *Hrvatski domobran*, 16 November 1928.
- ³⁷ *Hrvatski domobran*, 16 November 1928, *Hrvatski domobran*, 16 November 1928.
- ³⁸ Bzik (1942 a), 90.
- ³⁹ *Hrvatski domobran*, 5 December 1928.
- ⁴⁰ *Obzor*, 15 December 1924.
- ⁴¹ *Rakovica*, 2: 1937.
- ⁴² Šimić (1934), 186-91.
- ⁴³ R.K. (1937), 32-5, *Rakovica*, 2: 1937.
- ⁴⁴ Sirotković, 1 (1969), 160, Jelić et al. (1931), 1-5.
- ⁴⁵ Rajčević (1969), 496.
- ⁴⁶ *Mlada Hrvatska*, 3 October 1937, *Alma mater*, 26 March 1936, *Hrvatski akademikar*, 15 December 1937.
- ⁴⁷ *Alma mater*, 26 March 1936.
- ⁴⁸ Čović (1939), 7-14.
- ⁴⁹ Horvat (1942), 617.
- ⁵⁰ *Ustaška mladež*, 16 December 1941.
- ⁵¹ Latković (1942), 99-100.
- ⁵² Junašević and Belić (1943), 1028-50.
- ⁵³ *Hrvatska krajina*, 6 May 1941, Blažeković (1944), 149-50. Blažeković claimed that the Ustasha youth, in addition to 500,000 rank and file members, had 35,000 functionaries. "Ustaške mladež - pokoljenje nove Hrvatske," *Hrvatska rieč*, 10 April 1945, asserted that the Ustasha Youth had 180 commissars, 545 commanders and that 1310 members had passed through its training schools in the first four months of that year.
- ⁵⁴ *Alma mater Croatica*, 5: 1, September 1941, 1-2.
- ⁵⁵ *Nova Hrvatska*, 10 April 1942.
- ⁵⁶ *Nedjelja*, 21 September 1941.
- ⁵⁷ *Alma mater Croatica*, 5: 3, November 1941, 117.
- ⁵⁸ *Hrvatski narod*, 13 April 1941.
- ⁵⁹ *Nova Hrvatska*, 10 April 1942.
- ⁶⁰ *Nova Hrvatska*, 10 April 1942, *Nova Hrvatska*, 7 February 1942, *Hrvatski list*, 14 July 1944.
- ⁶¹ *Ustaša*, 10 August 1941.
- ⁶² *Rakovica*, 24 December 1941, *Alma mater Croatica*, 5: 4, December 1941, 165-66.
- ⁶³ Skračić (1942 a), 3-4.
- ⁶⁴ Milković (1942), 291-92.
- ⁶⁵ *Hrvatska smotra*, 10: 7-8, July-August 1942, 489-93, *Plava revija*, 2: 6-7, March-April 1942, 301-02.
- ⁶⁶ *Nova Hrvatska*, 18 January 1944, *Nova Hrvatska*, 31 January 1945.

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- ⁶⁷ *Ustaška mladež*, 24 August 1941.
- ⁶⁸ *Ustaška mladež*, 3 August 1941, *Ustaška mladež*, 24 August 1941, *Alma mater Croatica*, 5: 7, February 1942, 241-42.
- ⁶⁹ *Ustaša*, 24 August 1941, *Alma mater Croatica*, 5: 1, September 1941, 1-2.
- ⁷⁰ Cited in Kazimirović (1987), 112, n.5.
- ⁷¹ *Alma mater Croatica*, 5-6, January-February 1942, 171. However, this article also announced that scholarships were limited (at the time of writing they were accepting no more applications) and they had to be collected from the University Ustasha Organisation.
- ⁷² *Alma mater Croatica*, 5: 3, November 1941, 117, Šidak (1969), 177.
- ⁷³ *Ustaška mladež*, 24 August 1941.
- ⁷⁴ *Hrvatski narod*, 25 April 1944.
- ⁷⁵ *Spremnost*, 20 April 1944.
- ⁷⁶ Lengel-Krizman (1969), 506.
- ⁷⁷ *Hrvatski narod*, 10 January 1944.
- ⁷⁸ *Nova Hrvatska*, 10 April 1942.
- ⁷⁹ *Nova Hrvatska*, 28 December 1941.
- ⁸⁰ *Plava revija*, 3: 1-2, January-March 1943, 20-25.
- ⁸¹ *Hrvatski narod*, 25 November 1942.
- ⁸² *Hrvatski narod*, 25 November 1942.
- ⁸³ *Hrvatski narod*, 21 April 1944.
- ⁸⁴ *Plug*, 5 March 1944.
- ⁸⁵ *Plug*, 25 February 1944.
- ⁸⁶ Cited in Hory and Broszat (1965), 165.
- ⁸⁷ *Plug*, 5 May 1944.
- ⁸⁸ *Plug*, 5 May 1944.
- ⁸⁹ *Spremnost*, 30 April 1944, *Plug*, 5 May 1944.
- ⁹⁰ *Plug*, 25 April 1944.
- ⁹¹ *Hrvatski narod*, 26 April 1944.
- ⁹² *Hrvatski narod*, 30 April 1944.
- ⁹³ *Plug*, 20 September 1944, *Spremnost*, 22 October 1944.
- ⁹⁴ *Spremnost*, 22 October 1944.
- ⁹⁵ *Plug*, 20 September 1944.
- ⁹⁶ *Plug*, 20 September 1944.
- ⁹⁷ *Plug*, 20 September 1944.
- ⁹⁸ *Plug*, 20 September 1944, *Plug*, 20 September 1944.
- ⁹⁹ *Plug*, 5 March 1944.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Hrvatski list*, 9 May 1943, *Hrvatski list*, 5 May 1943.

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- ¹⁰¹ *Hrvatski narod*, 3 January 1945.
- ¹⁰² *Naš list*, 22 April 1944, *Ustaška mladež*, 7 June 1942, *Rakovica*, 29 October 1941.
- ¹⁰³ *Ustaška mladež*, 26 April 1942.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ustaška mladež*, 23 December 1941.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Hrvatski narod*, 16 April 1941, *Hrvatska krajina*, 24 April 1941.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Naš rad*, 6 September 1941.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ustaška mladež*, Easter 1942.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Ustaška mladež*, 1 March 1943.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ustaški mladež*, 15 July 1942.
- ¹¹⁰ *Ustaška mladež*, 18 January 1942.
- ¹¹¹ *Ustaška mladež*, 15 February 1941.
- ¹¹² *Ustaška mladež*, 18 January 1942.
- ¹¹³ GRP/NDH/27/232.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ustaška mladež*, 31 May 1942.
- ¹¹⁵ *Ustaška mladež*, 23 November 1941.
- ¹¹⁶ *Naš rad*, 6 September 1941.
- ¹¹⁷ *Katolički tjednik*, 25 May 1941.
- ¹¹⁸ *Ustaska mladez*, 23 November 1941.
- ¹¹⁹ GRP/NDH/27/257/10346, GRP/NDH/27/257/10346/5407.
- ¹²⁰ See, for example, *Ustaški junak*, 1: 1, April 1943.
- ¹²¹ *Ustaška mladež*, 16 January 1942, *Ustaška mladež*, 1 February 1942.
- ¹²² See, for example, *Ustaška mladež*, 1 September 1942, *Ustaška mladež*, 29 March 1942.
- ¹²³ *Nova Hrvatska*, 22 April 1943.
- ¹²⁴ *Ustaška mladež*, 1 June 1943.
- ¹²⁵ *Ustaškinja*, 2: 10, 10 January 1944, *Ustaša*, 31 January 1943, *Ustaška mladež*, 19 July 1943, *Ustaša*, 24 January 1943.
- ¹²⁶ *Ustaška mladež*, 10 April 1944.
- ¹²⁷ Blažeković (1944), 73-78.
- ¹²⁸ Blažeković (1944), 171-87.
- ¹²⁹ *Nedjelja*, 6 July 1941.
- ¹³⁰ *Plava revija*, 3: 1-2, January-February 1943, 1-5, *Naraštaj slobode*, 2: 6, (13) 1942, 1-2.
- ¹³¹ See, for example, *Ustaška mladež*, 10 April 1944.
- ¹³² *Ustaški junak*, 1: 1, October 1941, 14, *Ustaški junak*, 1: 1, October 1941, 17.
- ¹³³ *Ustaski junak*, 1:1, October 1941, 19-20, *Ustaški junak*, 1: 3, January 1942, 109-10.
- ¹³⁴ *Ustaški junak*, 1: 1, April 1943, *Ustaški junak*, 2: 1, June 1943.
- ¹³⁵ *Starčevićeva mladež*, 1: 2, January 1942, 41-42.
- ¹³⁶ *Plava revija*, 3: 3, February 1943, 65-74.

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- ¹³⁷ Jakopce (1941), 4, Brodnjak (1943), 100-01, Ilić (1942 a), 394-95, Puljiz (1944), Strugar (1944), 3-6.
- ¹³⁸ Lutz (1942), El-Pe (1944).
- ¹³⁹ Ilić (1942 b).
- ¹⁴⁰ *Ustaški junak*, 5: 1, n.d.
- ¹⁴¹ *Ustaška mladež*, 22 April 1944, *Ustaška mladež*, 15 September 1942, *Ustaška mladež*, 15 July 1943.
- ¹⁴² *Plava revija*, 3: 3 March 1943, 91-96. Regarding Panjkota's poetry at this time, see, for example, Panjkota (1942), 83,85.
- ¹⁴³ GRP/NDH/2/237/1942-3.T. 63/42.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Ustaša*, 24 August 1941.
- ¹⁴⁵ See, for example, *Naš rad*, 4 October 1941.
- ¹⁴⁶ *Naš list*, 22 April 1944.
- ¹⁴⁷ *Hrvatski radio list*, 6 July 1941.
- ¹⁴⁸ See, for example, *Ustaška mladež*, 10 April 1943.
- ¹⁴⁹ *Hrvatski narod*, 16 July 1942.
- ¹⁵⁰ Cerovac (1943), 196-98.
- ¹⁵¹ *Hrvatski narod*, 23 July 1942.
- ¹⁵² Mirković (1996), 80-85.
- ¹⁵³ *Hrvatski narod*, 10 April 1942, *Hrvatski narod*, 5 August 1942, *Ustaška mladež*, 1 September 1942.
- ¹⁵⁴ *Ustaški junak*, 3: 1, May 1943.
- ¹⁵⁵ See, for example, *Ustaški junak*, 4: 1, June 1943.

Three

The New Ustasha Man and Woman: Propaganda and Revolutionary Personae in the Independent State of Croatia

Until quite recently, the attitude of many scholars to the question of women in the fascist state could be summed up in Sylvia Pankhurst's dictum that "fascism and the emancipation of women are inherently opposed."¹ The popular image of women under both Italian fascism and German National Socialism was that of submissive females banished to the home. Where it was acknowledged that women might have played a role in fascist movements at all, they were assumed to have achieved their position by feminine wiles and then used their influence to implore other women to return to the family hearth. By contrast, so the argument goes, in socialist societies, women were liberated and equal. Recent studies of women under National Socialism and Italian Fascism have suggested that fascism's attitude to women was not as simple as this. Nor was the attitude of women to the rise of fascism as uncomplicated as Sylvia Pankhurst once suggested. Women were not simply opponents of fascism and nor did fascism always obstruct the rise of women or exclude them. On the contrary, women such as Lydia Gottschewski and Pia Sophie Rögge-Börner in Germany and Marghitta Sarfarti and Elsa Majer in fascist Italy felt themselves as much part of the nationalist revolution as their menfolk.² Women were not merely passive bystanders to the rise of fascism: even within such a system, they fought for their voices to be heard.³

At its inception, the Italian Fascist Party had supported the female suffrage cause and the right for women to hold office; Nazi women in the 1920s embraced the ideas of female emancipation and ran for office (and, on occasion, enlisted with paramilitary groups) and those women who joined the Nazi Party or Italian fascists did not see themselves as voting to return to domestic obscurity. In fact, more usually young women joined rightist movements as a rebellion against their

bourgeois mothers: they believed they were members of a radical political movement, not a reactionary conservative one and one, furthermore, which allowed them to throw off their “ladylike, superficial and boring” demeanour and brought them into contact with different kinds of girls and women.⁴ Fascism was seen as initially liberating for many women. Whilst it rejected feminism, viewing it as a bourgeois concern, it advocated female emancipation: its advocates frequently portrayed women in Amazonian terms and even proposed getting rid of the categories of male and female. They also frequently called on women to cast off female decorum and propriety and slavishness towards men in the cause of the fascist revolution.⁵ Indeed, it was only in the 1930s, to a large extent as a result of economic pressures, that both Nazis and fascists discovered the virtues of the female return to the home.⁶ Nevertheless, whatever resistance they encountered from men, women always aimed to play a role in the movement.⁷

The concept that fascism was anti-woman owes a lot to the popular image of fascism as a masculine cult.⁸ Fascists, as has already been mentioned, aimed to create a new person for their new epoch, the New Man. The idea of a New Man, pure in body and spirit, drew much of its inspiration from Friedrich Nietzsche’s writings which envisaged the creation of a new merciless human, but also was clearly influenced by ancient martial civilisations, such as Athens and Sparta. In the early 1900s, writers like the futurist Filippo Marinetti had begun to call for the creation of a New Man who would be aggressive, virile and warlike and without mercy.⁹ He envisaged the new era to be a masculine one, free of the effeminising influence of women. The idea of a new man also owed much to the experiences of soldiers in the First World War where men had bonded together in an atmosphere of death. Ernst Jünger, a soldier who wrote many books about his experiences in the War, described a new race of men with lithe muscular bodies, angular faces and eyes hardened by the horrors of war; the rightist philosopher, Oswald Spengler, called for a race of barbarians.¹⁰ In the 1920s and early 1930s, the novels of writers such as Ernst von Salomon and Arnolt Bronnen glorified the male community which had been created between Commanders and their troops during the Freikorps anti-Communist campaigns in the post-war era.¹¹ Although

writers such as Marinetti and Jünger were not fascists or Nazis themselves, their writing and ideas had an influence on politicians like Mussolini and Hitler. Hitler, for example, called for a race of “vigorous commanding and cruel young men with the strength and beauty of young beasts of prey and without a conscience” from whom “the world will shrink back in terror.”¹²

Marinetti and Jünger shared with fascists and Nazis a belief that the merciless New Man would be purified internally as well as externally. Led by a belief in the national community and militarism, he would crush all manifestations of what was considered softness or femininity in society: democracy, decadence, liberalism. Yet Marinetti did not envisage a world without women or indeed a world of submissive women. His call for masculinity and free love also liberated women from matrimonial obligations, advocating female liberation from bourgeois morals. Similarly, though the writings of Gabriel D’Annunzio, another novelist who was enormously influential on Mussolini, were undeniably militaristic, eulogising violence and conquest in the name of Italian male pride, as ruler of Fiume, he created a legion of female soldiers (the National Association of the Sisters of the Legionaries of Fiume), gave women the vote and the right to hold office and spoke of Italian women as Amazons: “The sons are moulded in their mothers’ likeness as we have seen. They have drunk a milk so strong that they can long endure fasting and discomfort,” he declared.¹³ Yet the concept of a new society built on the New Man, with its emphasis on virile camaraderie, masculine vigour and adventure could be misunderstood, not least by fascists themselves, and this aspect of its philosophy led to accusations by anti-fascist writers that it was a homosexual cult. It was not hard to see why they might think this, Mario Carlo, for example, a member of D’Annunzio’s Fiumean Arditti, wrote that the Italian squadristi with his “ardent-proud guileless eyes,” “sensual energetic mouth ready to kiss passionately, sing out sweetly and command imperiously” and his “sober-virile elegance” was ready to “run, fight, escape, dance and arouse a crowd.”¹⁴ By the 1930s, fascist leaders had crushed such talk. The Italian fascist Blackshirt would no longer be talked about in such sensual terms. The government placed levies on Italian bachelors and politicians such as

Carlo Sforza declared war on single Italian men vowing to make bachelors and other childless Italian men ashamed of not using their potential power to have children.¹⁵

What was true for the Italian fascists was even more so for the Nazis. The German Nazi Party was founded on the principles of masculinity and militarism and the desire to create a warrior society, the so-called *Mannerbund*, a concept which had originated with German youth groups in the early twentieth century. Alfred Bäumler, a Nazi ideologue, argued in 1937 that the concept of the *Mannerbund* went further than merely a warrior society: for him, it was about creating a male society separate from women. Without male bonding and a state built on the principles of male friendship and comradeship, men would inevitably sink into philistinism and eroticism and man would be left the choice of being “a sober business man, a slave of women or a simple-minded family man.”¹⁶ In the same year Bäumler wrote his study eulogising the *Mannerbund*, Heinrich Himmler, Reinhard Heydrich and other Nazi leaders were warning of an over-masculinisation of the Party with Himmler going as far as to suggest that the Party had trod the path to homosexuality. The Party’s leading feminists such as Lydia Gottschewki also sensed danger: she complained that the *Mannerbund* was anti-woman, not just anti-feminist, and had adopted a “woman-hating direction.”¹⁷ Enemies naturally made hay with this fact. As early as 1931, one journal, commenting on the dismissal of the captain of the Stormtroopers, Ernst Röhm, for his scandalous private life was claiming that the Nazi Party “fairly teams with homosexuals of all kinds” and homosexuality “blossoms around her campfires and is fostered and cultivated by them in a way done in no other male union that is reared on party politics.”¹⁸

The ambiguity of the Nazi Party reflected the fact that from its founding, the Party, and especially its stormtroopers, was a tough organisation of young men who cared little for bourgeois conventions and acceptable behaviour. Indeed, in the years before they came to power, they sometimes claimed that sexual behaviour was of no concern to them. According to one stormtrooper writing in 1932, “what two people do at home or in a hayloft is nobody else’s concern”

provided that it involved “healthy straight-forward fellows, youths from the *Wandervogel* movement, officers or sports enthusiasts” who fought for each other. Insisting that the sexuality of “me and my comrades” was not discriminated against, he claimed that the Nazi had a hand “which knows how to strike but also how to caress.”¹⁹ As with the Italian fascists, moral Puritanism came at a much later stage of the Nazis’ political development.

For fascists, the respective roles of men and women in society were integral to national life. Fascists believed that the nation, personified as a woman, was in danger. Only her protector, the male fascist warrior, could save her. At the same time, in accordance with their vision of the organic society, fascist movements viewed the state as a national family. In the fascist state, woman represented life and purity as the producer of the next generation, but she also personified death as both the suffering nation and the wife or mother of dead soldiers. The woman also represented sacrifice since she not only gave her sons to the fascist family to die on the battlefield, but also because she had foresworn a career or independent life in favour of procreation.²⁰ By contrast, fascists perceived man as virile, energetic and violent, the avenger and the source of the mystical values of the race. Yet in both men and women real sexuality was to be castrated since the rhetoric of fascist sexuality was chaste, virginal and pure. Despite claims to virility, in fascist societies only the supreme leader could be completely manly because he was the metaphorical husband of all the nation’s women and father of all the nation’s children, whom the mothers of the nation would give back to the “father” as an offering for the battlefield: therefore, he diminished the virility of his male followers. In women, their repressed sexuality was channelled into the procreation of children, whereas the repression of sexuality in men found its outlet in war, hence the eroticisation of death and killing in fascist propaganda. Although fascism promised the creation of a New Man who would be ultra-masculine and a New Woman who would be the personification of femininity, the opposite occurred and men and women became neutered.

Whereas fascists often emphasised a return to family life, the militant aesthetic of fascism with its idolisation of warriors’ values worked against the harmony of

male and female. Moreover, while fascism eulogised the role of the mother as educator and carer, the fascist man had two mothers: his real mother and the female nation and the obituaries of fallen soldiers demonstrated which mother was the more prized. In being described as a "son of the motherland," the fascist was claimed for a collective female, not an individual one. Fascism, as an anti-bourgeois movement, enjoyed an ambiguous relationship to the institution of the family, often railing against the "limited aspirations, the feebleness and the mediocre inspiration bourgeois family life can offer the individual."²¹ These contradictions were also apparent in the Ustasha Movement. As a terrorist movement which emphasised violent solutions to achieve its aims, like the Nazis and the fascists, it can be seen as a movement of men which had little place for women. This was certainly true in the inter-war period. With the foundation of the Croatian State in 1941, the Ustashes envisaged the creation of a new man who would avenge the humiliation and sufferings of the past. He would be merciless and ruthless in dealing with his enemies and once again be the authoritarian head of the patriarchal family unit. Since the Ustashes viewed feminism and the quest for women's rights as the legacy of a moribund and outdated democratic era which was embodied in the Yugoslav Kingdom, they sought to build a warrior society and reassert male control by returning women to the home to be good mothers and wives. Yet it would be wrong to suggest, as some historians have, that Ustasha ideology saw the roles of men and women in such a simple way.²² As much as the Ustashes despised the era of Yugoslav rule which it associated with modern urban values, it also appropriated much of its rhetoric and ideology. Whether by accident or design, between 1941 and 1945, women's involvement in public life and the labour market actually increased. Female members of the Movement, too, demonstrated that they were not content to live the life that the Ustashes' propaganda machine said they should. As for men, although they were expected to be the head of the family, the warrior cult of the Ustasha Movement with its emphasis on male bravado and comradeship, took them constantly away from family life, to the extent that one could argue that the Movement in many ways actually replaced the family as the centre of the Ustasha's life.

Yugoslav Virilities: Decadent Democracy and Liberated Sexuality in the First Yugoslavia

Some Yugoslav idealists saw themselves as the millenarian creators of a revolutionary new state and a New Man and Woman. Yugoslavs, argued one leading ideologue, were “a virile nation full of temperament and with strong inclinations towards culture.”²³ This label applied to both men and women who were to be equal partners and comrades building the new society. On a very basic level, women in Yugoslavia did receive more freedom and had access to a wider range of options. In the 1920s and 1930s, in common with women in other parts of Europe, they were entering the workforce in increased numbers and in some industries replacing men. Employment laws were also being changed to adjust to the increasing participation of women in the labour force. A law of 1922 which aimed to protect the rights of workers, banned women who had babies from working until their offspring were at least two months old. Under this law, women were given paid maternity leave and provided with workplace crèches.²⁴ For the first time, women were also being given military training through the Sokols. The training included being taught how to use rapiers and rifles in the event of external aggression.²⁵ Throughout the existence of the Yugoslav Kingdom, there were many visible independent women in professional spheres as diverse as the arts, athletics and medicine. In the liberal and optimistic atmosphere of the 1920s and 1930s, the emancipated and educated Yugoslav woman became a stereotype, both lauded and despised in journalism and political commentary. The image of the liberated new Yugoslav woman, as she was known, was also popularised in images of women in visual arts where they were frequently depicted as athletic and Amazonian.²⁶

This was the official image. The reality was rather different. Although it is true that women were replacing men in the labour market, it was predominantly owing to the fact that they were cheaper to employ since most of them did not have work insurance. Women were not only paid less than men (in 1926 this

amounted to five dinars less an hour), but they were also subject to far more exploitation at work. Despite the raft of labour laws supposed to protect them, women were beaten at work, forced to do overtime (often at night) and physically demanding work. Few women challenged such behaviour because they needed the money: unemployment benefit was scarce and many women had been left widows as a result of the First World War and had no other means of support.²⁷ In any case, the law hardly allowed women to pick and choose which career they wished to follow and many occupations simply were not open to them. While they could be telephonists and teachers, they were barred by law from being judges, holding political positions or being directors of businesses or banks.²⁸

In the enthusiasm of the founding of the new Yugoslav Kingdom in 1918, many Yugoslav ideologues hoped that one of the priorities of the state would be to free women from all discriminatory laws. Indeed, some ideologues argued that it was vital to the existence of the Yugoslav Kingdom. Without the co-operation of women, it was said, there could be no Yugoslav state, no progress and no new society. With the liberation of women, men and women would together make a new Yugoslav society. Likewise writers argued that without the emancipation of Muslim women, Muslim society itself could not be liberated.²⁹ However, these hopes were to be sorely disappointed. Many of the same writers who held such high hopes of female liberation expressed doubts that it could be achieved. Apart from “empty phrases” about the right to vote, complained one, women’s issues were not discussed in political debates. One feminist, considering the marital status of women in Yugoslavia in 1920, noted sadly that “all the states which were newly-formed after the War solved this problem without lengthy consideration, except ours...The man is the head of the family, he has the right to manage the household. Under our laws, after a divorce, the husband has de facto right to the child because after the age of seven, the child belongs to him.”³⁰ This doleful analysis mirrored the opinion of feminist organisations who throughout the 1920s and 1930s demanded in vain for the right to equal education, an end to prostitution and, above all, the right to vote.

Despite the lack of progress in terms of women's rights, those small advances which were made were deemed to have gone too far for nationalist organisations. In Croatia, nationalist students saw it as simply another manifestation of the moral degeneracy of Yugoslavism. Comparing feminist student meetings to those of the Komsomol, one writer accused them of encouraging young women to work in preference to marriage and to have abortions. Girls today, the writer declared, had no understanding of their role as women, "future mothers and educators and daughters of the nation." Instead, feminists had involved them in "destructive, immoral, anti-social and anti-national work."³¹ Nationalist and clerical writers advocated the raising of a generation of maternal university women who would realise that their place in society was not at college or working with men, but in the community, helping others. Female rights had to be in harmony with "female dignity and not oppose its sensibility."³² This was in direct opposition to the aspirations of some Yugoslav women who, for example, during the 1927 elections, protested for the right to vote and demanded to be listened to. They wanted to be seen as something more than simply a wife or mother. As Serafina Poljanec wrote pointedly in 1936: "To be a mother and wife is not a profession for a woman."³³

If the new Yugoslav woman was based, to some extent, on a thoroughly modern stereotype, the new Yugoslav man could look to a much older tradition for his model. Dinaric man, an anthropological phenomenon popularised by the Serb ethnographer, Jovan Cvijić, was held up as the epitome of Yugoslav manhood in romantic poems, plays and literature. Hailing from the Dinaric Mountain range which runs through Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia and Montenegro, Cvjić identified a number of personality traits. His environment in the rugged mountains made him hot-blooded, brutal, with a "lively temperament" and prepared to swim in blood to preserve his heroic traditions and "sacred freedom." He was deeply patriotic, feeling as close to national heroes as to his own family. He was also ready to sacrifice himself for his nation, a moral cause or the benefit of the race. In such a situation, he could "hate with a consuming passion and a violence that reaches a white heat." For the Dinaric man, vengeance was a holy act. However, he possessed a number of civilising qualities. He had "kindness, good feeling, a

sense of justice” and was sensitive and kind to opponents. He personified too the essence of male comradeship, practising a sworn blood-brotherhood known as *pobratimstvo*, an act of ceremonial male bonding in which he and a close friend would bind their hands together in front of witnesses and promise to remain faithful to each other until death.³⁴ Yugoslav culture was, in any case, in many ways a deeply masculine culture: it honoured sport as a symbol of the harmony of the “body, soul and spirit,”³⁵ its national icons and heroes (for example, Marko Kraljević, King Tomislav and Tsar Lazar) were overwhelmingly male warriors and Yugoslav poets and writers often symbolised Yugoslavism in militant, fierce and masculine terms.³⁶

Becoming a Man: Masculinity and the Ustasha Movement

Michael Herzfeld has written that in Balkan societies “it is not enough just to be a man...one must be good at *being* a man.” He has argued that the male in such societies acts out a masculine performance, entailing “elements of surprise, ingenuity, shock, perhaps even repulsion.”³⁷ The fascist cult of masculinity was a similar kind of performance involving mental toughness, physical prowess and the disavowal of all sentimental qualities. As already mentioned, like all fascist movements, the Usthas were a movement of men and they placed profound importance on notions of masculinity. For decades, the nationalist Croatian male had laboured under the stereotype of pacifism and compromise. According to some Yugoslav ideologues, Yugoslavia had represented not just the coming together of different South Slav nations but also the fusing of diverse national characters. Milan Marjanović, for example, wrote that while the Serb was heroic and ready to die, the Croat wanted to live. He was “more contemplative, forgives more, reacts less, is more a sceptic, almost a cynic rather than a fanatic.” Overly intellectual, his character was marked by relativism, inactivity and a lack of moral strength.³⁸

The Ustashas felt that their nation had been humiliated in the first Yugoslavia, not just in the sense that Croatia was an oppressed nation in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, but also in the sense that Yugoslav culture, which had appropriated Serbian myths and traditions, seemed to suggest that Croatian history was without heroism and intrepidity. All that Croats had been left with to assert their rights was the pacifistic stance of Stjepan Radić, who had been rewarded for his endeavours with assassination. The Ustasha ideology was the radical antithesis of this pacifism and an answer to the perceived Serb aggression. It aimed to replace the weak urbanised Croat man citizen, personified by moral degeneracy, nervousness and corrupt political compromise with the violent, vengeful and manly peasant of Croat folklore. In the new Ustasha society, the new man would be led by the just values of the peasant *zadruga*. The recourse to violence and the cult of “manly virtue” cleansed the Croatian male of all softness and indecision and restored his honour. This New Croatian Man, the Ustasha warrior, was also a patriarchal personality who protected the family hearth; thus, he would also be protecting Croatian womenfolk from damaging trends in democratic society like feminism which had harmed them.³⁹

Mijo Bzik believed that the Ustasha was a new kind of man for a new world order. Imbued with the qualities of heroism and struggle, he would be completely a man and a Croat. Mladen Lorković too believed that the new Croat man would embody manly and masculine values.⁴⁰ Although the ideologues of the Ustasha Movement stressed the long and proud history of the Croatian military tradition, they also believed that young Croatian men had been made unmanly by twenty years of democracy and Yugoslavism. With the arrival of the Ustasha Movement, youths became men. Perhaps the best example of the transformation is demonstrated by the propaganda produced between 1942 and 1943 for the Black Legion of Jure Francetić. When Francetić was killed in action in December 1942, there was an outpouring of grief amongst Ustasha supporters. Poems and plays were written to honour his heroism and love for the Homeland. However, in funereal orations and obituaries for Francetić, his transformation from simple

peasant into a model Ustasha warrior was also emphasised. He was a rugged hero who had come amongst his people to save them in their hour of need:

In these fateful moments, amongst men on whose shoulders was placed arduous duties, one young tall Ustasha soldier worked and shared these duties. In a simple and modest Ustasha uniform, he toiled without rest or end...But at that time, no one could have known that this tall, young soldier would one day become a legendary man, a hero about whom national songs would be sung and about whom the poorest and isolated villages in the Bosnian valleys would one day talk about most. Who could have guessed that in this stern craggy young face hid an unmistakable hero, a divine leader of a young heroic detachment which would for so many Croats mean life and freedom, defence and comfort, hope and pride?⁴¹

The Black Legion was also seen as a transforming experience for Sarajevo youth itself. According to one report on the Legionaries, "Youth who previously loved to daydream the whole morning and were taught to be students of the easy life, now were accustomed to the strict life of the military warrior whose bed was the ground and whose only party and dance was battle."⁴² Ivo Balentović, a writer and journalist who had spent months accompanying the Legionaries talked of them as agile youths whose "bravery glitters in their eyes."⁴³

After they had joined an Ustasha unit such as the Black Legion, men left their former life behind forever. Becoming an Ustasha was an irrevocable decision and men could only be severed from the Movement by death or disgrace. Like Ernst Jünger's men of steel, the horrors of war they had witnessed had been for them a rite of passage, a necessary induction to the life of the Ustasha man. They were men, Franjo Bubanić wrote in 1942, who had looked death in the eyes.⁴⁴ In becoming an Ustasha, the Croatian man was transformed not merely in terms of his lifestyle but also his personality too. Valuing modesty, it was said, he refused to talk about himself; he remained an enigma and spoke in "short and fierce sentences" since chattering was perceived as a female trait and a vice which was unnatural for an Ustasha man. His life was one of manly silence. Likewise, when a comrade died, the Ustasha, according to Bzik, should not cry since enemies would consider this a sign of weakness. Instead, as a true Ustasha he should accompany his comrade to the grave in a dignified and quiet manner, feeling a

great pain for the loss of a comrade, but expressing his grief in a “manly way” by vowing to avenge the death of his comrade.⁴⁵

The Ustashas, not surprisingly, also saw a strong connection between sport and war, which they perceived as embodying the qualities of masculinity and aggression. In Yugoslavia, they argued, physical education had been ignored and young men had become “pansies.”⁴⁶ For the Ustashas, sports such as football, athletics and skiing were an expression of the life-force of the nation and they believed that victorious sportsmen would also make valiant soldiers. Football players such as Slavin Cindrić and August Pogačnik, both members of the Black Legion, were lionised in the press as the best Ustashas and Croats after they fell in battle.⁴⁷ Yet, although the Ustashas were often seen as the élite men of the State, the cult of masculinity also included all Croatian men, save for ideological adversaries. Sometimes, the effect of this could be quite comical. The State press, for example, hailed the ballet dancer Oskar Harnoš for his “unbelievably manly” style of dancing.⁴⁸ The Ustasha Movement, from its inception, sought to immortalise the manly struggle of its warriors in poems and songs. The Ustasha anthem itself told the story of a brave young Ustasha expiring with joy on the battlefield from wounds. Likewise, Josip Begović’s poem, written hours before his execution by the Yugoslav government, told how the Ustasha “does not fear, he does not cry/ he bravely awaits death.”⁴⁹ These kinds of songs and poems were a reflection of the kind of propaganda which appeared throughout the 1930s in Ustasha leaflets when Ustasha terrorists and activists such as Stipe Javor were tortured to death or, like the peasant Ivan Rošić, executed. However, with the creation of the Croat State, the Ustasha warrior, who, after all, now constituted the military cadres of the State, could not solely rely upon his former martyr status. Therefore, writers and the scribes of the Movement transformed the Ustasha into a mythic warrior. In Matija Marčinko’s *Borči* (Warriors, 1944), he was part of a legion of young men with “eyes that burn with fire,” “iron hands” and “hard muscles that drizzle with sweat” striding with firm steps through mud, fog and dew.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, in Branko Klarić’s *Ponor i sunce* (The Chasm and the Sun, 1942), he was a knight arisen from the earth whose footsteps “echo like an

alarm” and whose invitations are “carried like the call of fate.” Wherever he went, the earth trembled and his “footprints are written with flame in the stone cliffs.”⁵¹ Vladimir Jurčić’s ode to the “brave sons” of the Black Legion, *Pjesma časti i slave* (A Poem about Honour and Glory, 1943) wrote that “every one of its warriors a steel shield...O, heroic legion! Legion of fame and honour,/ unit of the immortal.”⁵² The Ustasha soldier as mythic warrior was also reflected in visual arts. The sculptures and paintings promoted by the State showed the new Croatian man no longer as nervous or suicidal, but as a proletarian superman, a heroic soldier dying on the battlefield or as a Greek athlete.⁵³

Intimacy and Terror: Death and Manly Love

Like many fascist movements, the Ustahas believed that their warrior cult was moral and ethical. Unlike the degenerate and savage regime which had predated them, they were not “bandits, butchers, barbarians and hyenas.” They argued that the new Ustasha man would be not just virile and without “tenderness or mercy” but also chaste, pure and free of all decadent and degenerate forms of morality, leading a life rooted in the patriarchal family unit, the foundation of all healthy national life.⁵⁴ A handbook for Croatian soldiers reminded commanding officers that the Ustasha soldier should think about women the way he thought about his own sister, mother, fiancée or wife. “Ideally, one should not boast about one’s sexual adventures,” it cautioned, “because this inflames the sexual fantasies of immature and inexperienced young men. They could, at a moment of weakness, carry out an assault which would leave an unfortunate stamp on their future, their health and the health of their family.”⁵⁵ The Ustahas also punished members of the Movement accused of indulging in acts of sexual degeneracy with execution or internment in concentration camps. In many cases it was not made clear by the press what exactly a certain Ustasha functionary had done beyond an

oblique reference to an “unworthy” private life.⁵⁶ Yet, for the Ustashas, marriage was the only guarantee of a morally pure life and they used all kinds of propaganda and pressure to encourage men to marry. This was not limited only to members of the Movement but was also extended to all groups of men whom it was felt represented the nation to the outside world. Therefore, while the Ustashas never introduced a tax against bachelors as the Italian fascists had done, they did use propaganda to induce Croatian men to marry. For example, in March 1943, the Ministry of Sport organised a charity match between a team of married and unmarried football players to prove that, although married men were, on average, older, they made better football players and state athletes.⁵⁷ In addition, after the death of the legionary-poet, Pero Kojaković, his marriage at a young age and his devotion to his wife were perceived by those who eulogised him as crucial to his success as a legionary.⁵⁸

However, the stable married life which the Ustashas imagined for the new Croat man often conflicted with life as an Ustasha. The Ustasha Movement, as has been said, began as a movement of conspiratorial terrorists. Its revolutionary structure based on a collection of cells and its secretive nature meant that trust between members was paramount. Like terrorist groups throughout history, a man who became a member of the Ustasha Movement had to put the cause of the revolution above everything. He was often required to change his name, abandon his family and move abroad. In effect, the Ustasha Movement in exile became the surrogate family of its members which taught them to develop “iron” will and discipline, rejecting soft qualities such as love and sentimentality. However, iron will and discipline applied not just to their life as a terrorist, but also their private life. Ustasha exiles were encouraged to repress their sexual urges and channel their energy into devotion towards the Movement and their leader, Pavelić, instead.⁵⁹ Thus, like many terrorist groups, the typical émigré Ustasha was young and unmarried. As with many other such organisations, the lifestyle of the members of the Movement, which demanded living in close proximity with comrades, and without comforts or the company of women, produced friction and conflicts, but it also produced an intense feeling of camaraderie which some

former terrorists have likened to having a lover.⁶⁰ Mijo Bzik's hagiographic history of the Ustasha Movement noted that when Ustashas first met with the Poglavnik, their hearts would palpitate and their bodies shake. "There was not one among us who did not view the Poglavnik with the greatest of love."⁶¹ Histrionics no doubt, but it surely contained an element of truth.

The idea of the postponement of marriage and a private life in favour of the Movement and the nation was also very much used by the Ustashas after they came to power. Slavko Kvaternik, the commander of the Croatian Armed Forces, for one, told his young recruits that in joining the Ustasha army, "you have married the Croatian homeland."⁶² The concept of a spiritual marriage between the Movement, its men and the nation was also explored in novels and short stories. In Ismet Zunić's story, *Pobjednik* (The Victor, 1942), the protagonist, Zeko Bubuljaša, is a "young, prankish, indecisive and fickle" eighteen year-old who loves to flirt and whose greatest desire is to get married. His comrades, by contrast "embrace guns, defending their honour and sacred native soil from bandits." However, by the end of the story, Bubuljaša too has become an Ustasha warrior. This means putting his marital plans on hold. "Today, and especially for me, it is not time to marry," he exclaims. Instead, he comes to the conclusion that his place is amongst heroes and warriors. "The homeland is more precious than anything." In this story there are two Zekos: the responsible Zeko, the heroic Zeko has to take precedence over the "impetuous Zeko, the happy Zeko who wanted to marry as soon as possible." Joining the Ustasha Movement could be a redemptive journey to manhood in which the Croat man found his real family, the Ustasha family of warriors.⁶³

The idea of a family of Ustasha men was used to foster a sense of brotherhood and solidarity amongst its military units. In the Black Legion, Jure Francetić took on the role of father to his troops. According to the historian of the Legion, Ivo Balentović, few of the recruits to the legion had passed their eighteenth birthday, since Francetić "wanted only young men" for his comrades. "With much love, he saw to their upbringing. And they loved him with a passion. These comrades got to know Jure as if he were their born father. He brought them up with tenderness

and never raised a hand to them.”⁶⁴ There seems to have been an intense bond between Francetić and his legionaries: when one blew himself up with his hand grenade rather than risk capture and imprisonment by the enemy, Francetić is said to have exclaimed: “I have lost a son!” For their part, young legionaries, like Josip Križanac, wrote poems of honour for him in which they wrote that they loved him like “our own father.” It was written that before expiring at the hands of Partisan torturers, Francetić’s name was the last word he uttered.⁶⁵

With his death in 1942, Francetić was immortalised. In a testament of love, his legionaries wrote letters to him in the pages of Sarajevo newspapers asking him, as their father, to guide them and watch over them in future battles, as did one of his most devoted followers, the priest Božidar Brale. “Without you, we are orphans,” he wrote.⁶⁶ He was also the subject of emotional and evocative poetic tributes. In Anto Mikulić’s imagination, legionaries come to visit his grave. “Again, hushed silence reigns/ on the wind a line of black flutters/ guards stand over the grave and they say to everyone,/ ‘Jure loves you, warriors of the Black Legion!’”⁶⁷ In Branko Klarić’s tribute to him, “the native earth glistened / with your fertile blood (like with young wine)...And you became with the passion of Ustashas, my brother,/ you sacrificed your youth, your heart, your dreams,/ you sacrificed everything.” Francetić was his “Ustasha, brother, dear son, darling one, the only one.”⁶⁸

As Klarić’s poem suggests, the Ustasha Movement was founded not just on the concept of the family but also male friendship on and off the battlefield. As well as taking manly revenge to avenge fallen comrades, Ustashas were also expected to show manly tenderness. After Francetić’s death, one story told of his compassion towards a captured Partisan Serb fighter. Whether myth or truth, it was transformed into a story of male friendship on the battlefield.

Both fighters faced each other. They were ten metres away from each other...In the eyes of Milenko Ećimović, the former sergeant, who had been many times decorated as the best shooter in the army, tears appeared. He spoke with a quivering voice: “I would beg you, sir...Beg for something great, something impossible...” “Speak! I am listening to you!” the commander replied in a warm and friendly voice. “I would beg you that I...I...that I...” “But?” “That you accept me,”

said Milenko Ećimović quietly and then, as if without breath, "That you accept me into the Black Legion!" Francetić stopped and thought for a moment. And then he raised his head and with a long penetrating glance looked into the tear-stained eyes of Milenko Ećimović. And then Francetić lowered his glance and confronted his soldiers. "From today this youth is your comrade. I want no one ever to mention his Partisan past!" Milenko Ećimović leapt towards the commander with his tear-filled eyes in order to embrace him...And Milenko Ećimović stepped into their ranks. And he sang..."⁶⁹

However, there was also a certain sense in which fighting and dying in battle, and thus delaying family life, was not simply a patriotic necessity but also a choice which real Ustasha men would gladly make. Despite the moral Puritanism of the Movement, it is also important to remember that the Ustashas, as fascists and as militant nationalists, also sought to defy bourgeois convention. In obituaries of Ustashas it was common to read that their last words expressed their ultimate desire to perish for the Homeland. When Ivica Majnarić died in 1943, his comrade, Ivan Čurl, quoted him as saying: "I have never been as happy as when I find myself amongst Ustasha soldiers. I have abandoned everything, I have negated everything except my fist and my heart which I have placed in the service of the Poglavnik and Ustasha Croatia."⁷⁰ Between 1941 and 1945, one could argue that a cult of male friendship in some senses replaced family relationships. Fairly typical was Ivo Balentović's tribute to a dead comrade who had been stabbed to death. In Balentović's account, the dead male was recalled as "handsome...Dark, tall and as fresh as a spring night." The writer wept over his lifeless body like a "hurt woman."⁷¹

In this era, male friendships were intimately connected to the war experience. For legionaries on the Eastern Front or soldiers at home, life was a precious commodity and death could come at any moment. Therefore, hardly surprisingly, male friendship was bound up with death. In this world there was little place for thoughts of women. The legionaries were involved in serious men's business. As one Ustasha declared: "I do not have a girlfriend. We are all committed to each other until death."⁷² The intense camaraderie and bonding between soldiers also led some of them to write about their feelings and experiences. This type of

soldiers' poetry which emerged predominantly from 1943 onwards when Ustasha and military casualties became heavier, was morbid and was preoccupied with the themes of dying, graves and, above all, love for comrades. Although many ordinary soldiers wrote this kind of poetry,⁷³ the most famous exponent was the devoutly Catholic Pero Kojaković. In his poems he wrote of the deep feelings he had developed for his comrades. "On the battlefield where only death rules,/ and no one knows his own last hour/ and there everything is sharp, tearful and bitter" the love of a soldier for a comrade "is worth more than gold,/ and it is more beautiful than the most eternally sung poem." Since the soldier was away from home, his comrade would take the place of the mother and "he carries his comrade in whom life expires,/even at the price that his own life is blotted out." This love is "the love above all love;/this love is stronger than death;/ while this love prevails between us,/there is nothing, which can wipe us out!"⁷⁴ However, more than love for his comrades, Kojaković also felt love for the graves precisely because they contained the corpses of his beloved comrades. In another poem, he wrote: "Graves, most eagerly I stand at your edge,/There I am alone with my dear/ own dead brothers/ and the strength of sacrifice! Graves, while I stand guard by you,/ I am weighed down by the love of my brothers!/Graves, I love you!/Graves, I don't fear you! My only great blessing/in this world is this:/By the faraway Steppes, you,/ graves are my brothers!"⁷⁵

Mater Dolorosa and Medea: The Two Faces of the Ustasha Woman

Croatia was a mother. In Božidar Širola's drama, *Majka* (The Mother, 1942), an ailing son is nursed back to health by his mother only for him then to join the Ustasha army. Although conflicted, she also realises that he is a son of the Homeland and must obey the voice of his "other mother." A real mother "would never prevent her son from being a faithful son to his other mother, to his

homeland, because, for the real Croatian mother, when her son becomes a soldier she becomes much more than she was before: with the collective mother, she becomes a mother-heroine.”⁷⁶ In the poems of legionaries and soldiers, the Homeland was also a mother. Antun Lončar, for example, wrote of Croatia as “the mother of all good Croats./ We are your sons and are always prepared, Mama,/ for your freedom and honour/ our lives to give.”⁷⁷ Women agreed: “Can a good child not listen to its mother when she cries for help? Our Homeland is our mother who calls for us and asks for the help of her sons in this arduous time of war,” the leading Ustasha women’s journal wrote in 1942.⁷⁸ In the same way as a dutiful son showed respect and love towards his own mother, the Ustashes would show it towards the Homeland too. The warriors of the Ustasha Movement would be her best sons protecting her serenity and purity from the depredations of her savage enemies. Yet, as the reborn Croatian nation was imagined as a warlike fierce militant nation, the symbol of the mother was also imbued with warrior qualities and the Ustashes sometimes wrote that they had imbibed their militant Ustasha principles in their mother’s womb.⁷⁹ From the moment that they came to power in 1941, the Ustashes began to write about the necessity of woman, after twenty years of feminist emancipation, to return to the home to be a model submissive mother and wife. Yet they also organised women into their own separate Ustasha organisation, the Lodge of Ustasha Women, which brought women from all kinds of backgrounds, professions and incomes together and, in encouraging an activist attitude and using militant language, increased women’s sense of independence. Therefore, the Croatian mother was to be both an angel of the house and an avenging fury.

The Ustashes believed that they were the bringers of a revived cult of motherhood based on “ceaseless sacrifice, ceaseless denial, ceaseless effort and the ending of all wishes and ambitions.” In the past, they argued, motherhood had been degraded, denied, devalued and “ridiculed.” This went hand in glove with the attempts to wipe away the identity of the Croatian nation since the mother protected Croatdom by giving new life to the nation and bringing up a young generation filled with nationalist spirit.⁸⁰ Zdenka Žanko, one of the leaders

of the women's Ustasha Movement, argued that in Yugoslavia, an anti-family and anti-mother spirit had reigned. Women had been made into "café dolls without children" and had been encouraged to sacrifice their family for their career. In some cases, they had even been driven by the morals of the State to abandon their children on street corners or "kill their own descendants, consciously and calculatedly kill and criminally slaughter them." Materialistic philosophies had driven Croat women away from society. Ustasha ideology, by contrast, vowed to take women away from work and give their jobs to men so they could be breadwinners and restore their pride. The Movement expected women to return to their "natural role as matriarchs" and, in return it would offer them material and moral help and respect. The hour of the "dear good sacrificial noble and great Croat mother" had arrived.⁸¹

Some women welcomed the return to maternity and domesticity. For example, when a delegation of peasant women visited the Poglavnik, the leader of the delegation, Sofija Brajša, told him that "The most natural impulse and the first task of women is the creation and education of children and thus a married woman who flees from this invitation has failed the main aim and intention of marriage." Brajša contrasted the family-orientated politics of the Croatian state to that of the Yugoslav state where she, the mother of twelve children, had found it difficult to get accommodation.⁸² To rectify a state of affairs in which motherhood had been so devalued, the Ustashes proposed to take control of the private lives of their citizens and re-educate them through public schemes. For example, they launched a scheme to educate prospective marriage partners on the duties of family and marriage. Those planning to get married would need to be physically and spiritually healthy but they should also be assisted by the state to stay faithful to their marriage vows. They were also encouraged to improve domestic life themselves. The home could not be some kind of dosshouse, "an inn for the quenching of hunger, a passing shelter from which one would impatiently step out to the office, workshop or to a meeting." In such a case, the family home was "cold and unpleasant" and life in it "nervy, rude and sour."⁸³ Instead, the home of the new Croatian woman "arranged tidily, arranged with taste will be for her

husband and children the most delightful place to stay. The home is her temple in which the sacred flame of love and sacrifice burns.”⁸⁴ The Ustashas also promoted motherhood using the new mass propaganda tools available to them. Beginning in 1941, the State produced educational films on good maternity practice and the radio provided weekly lectures and programmes on motherhood. In one radio address, for instance, a leading health expert, Kamilo Bresler, talked of the need to support conventional family units and ensure the social and economic protection of mothers and children because “a nation without children is a nation without a future.” He contrasted this with the inter-war years of high infant-mortality rates and the low birth rate and blamed this on modern democratic society, namely, abortions, illegitimacy, the collapse of marriage as an institution and the need for men and women to work. He called for a number of measures to increase the birth rate and so avoid the curse of a decreasing population, known as the “White Plague.” Measures included the establishment of sanatoriums for sick children, advice centres, school kitchens, daily milk for children, and social health libraries. While the State organised many propaganda events such as the Week of the Croatian Mother, it is not clear that any of these institutions or ideas came to pass.⁸⁵

Since the Independent State of Croatia was an extreme natalist state which saw woman’s natural destiny in terms of procreation and the protection of the family, the ownership of not just their children and private lives but also their bodies was transferred to the State. Abortion was outlawed and made punishable by death for both the woman and the doctor. The State also launched a propaganda war against abortion. In an article in the official almanac of the Ustasha Movement, E.L. Miloslavić, a leading ideologue, called abortion “the destruction of the human embryo” and he condemned abortionists as “criminals” motivated purely by profit. He argued that in the last twenty years, the practice of abortion had reached the villages and begun to destroy them. Therefore, those who had abortions were committing crimes against not only their villages and societies but also against their nation. He also warned women that, should they have abortions, they risked not only their health but could also become hysterics,

prostitutes or develop unnatural sexual appetites.⁸⁶ The Ustashas' concern about abortion can be explained partly by the Movement's Catholic roots and belief in traditional morality. However, it also reflected the fact that they believed that the nation was in danger of dying out: women were choosing careers, they argued, over producing children. As a result, in villages throughout Croatia, non-Croats were outnumbering Croats. Not only feminism was to blame: Jewish doctors, who had "raked in a fortune" by carrying out abortions in the Yugoslav era, had also helped to decimate the Croatian family. As early as May 1941, writers were calling for ban on contraception and the taxing of families with only two children or less since the number one enemy of the state was "the complete or partial sterility of women."⁸⁷

For the Ustashas, the crime of abortion was made more heinous by the fact that they believed that woman was a sacrosanct font of virtue and purity. Female emancipation, in the contemporary sense of the word, was wrong because it was attempting to make mannish women and ersatz men and this was unnatural. A woman had to be moral and pure. In the cities, one writer noted, every day one saw women with the "reddest lips and fingernails" wearing "the most revealing and transparent clothing." In the new Croatia, these "emancipated heroines" and "apostles of 'progress'" would have to disappear. The new Croatian woman would be modelled on the Catholic girl with a prayer book in her hand. Croatia did not need female champions in dancing or sport, he argued, but "missionaries of moral holiness" exemplifying "purity, sacrifice and love."⁸⁸ By the middle of 1941, the Ustashas had introduced laws against the wearing of make-up by female teachers and students. Leading female educationalists agreed. Ela Maroš wrote that as opposed to Yugoslavia where women had been taught decadence and cosmopolitanism, the new Croatian woman had to live for her family rather than herself. She would be "the soul of the house" and "modest in dress, dignified but proud." In truth, she would be "a bodily angel, a moral assistant in her husband's struggles in life, a gold-winged bird."⁸⁹

This is not to say that women were not to have any meaningful role in the envisaged Ustasha society. Even female ideologues such as Mira Dugački, who

believed that first and foremost woman should be the “protectress of the Croatian hearth,” wrote that a woman should not work “as a slave but as a collaborator” and that women should be involved in all “branches of human creation.”⁹⁰ In addition, owing to their role as educators, the Ustashas believed that women had an important societal function. The Ustashas argued that the nature of women was innate. From the earliest age while boys played with soldiers and guns, women spent their time with dolls in preparation for their humanitarian role in future life. The public role of women for which the Ustashas were preparing women later in life consisted of not just caring for the sick and the poor but also rooting out vices such as drunkenness, gambling and the squandering of money. The Ustashas believed that women could have a civilising influence on men, and especially soldiers. In Yugoslavia, argued one woman writer, the female Ustashas had been a “movement of the soul.” It was a woman’s natural instinct, observable in the behaviour of girls in the classroom, to help others. In a time of war and conflict in the new State, Croatian soldiers had lost all “spirituality” and thought only of hatred for the enemy. They had become “coarse” and inured to “beautiful and noble feelings.” Since the dictates of the national revolution demanded that the younger generation be educated in how to succeed in annihilating the enemy, there was a certain destructive spirit at work. “From this our marching songs and national poems emerged. Swords, battles, blood...Now a revolution of the souls has begun. A new generation of Ustasha Croatia must be positively educated.”⁹¹

The coarse habits of the new revolutionary Croat man was a recurring theme in the journal for female Ustashas. Maca Minić, who had written about the coming of a revolution of the soul, thought men’s uncouth behaviour could be attributed to the conflict between the establishment of national freedom and the militant and militaristic demands of the revolution. Minić believed that this roughness could be cured by the more refined presence of women and in this idea she was not alone. The concept of the rough Ustasha, civilised by the love of a woman, was reflected not just in ideological articles but in plays and literary expositions too. In one short story in the Ustasha women’s journal, a young girl in love with a “handsome brave” Ustasha lieutenant realises that her infatuation with him is

only based on physical appearances and she needs to look inside at his behaviour towards others. Troubled by his wild ways, she goes to church and prays to God to make him virtuous. It works. At the end of the story, we learn that he has been transformed. "He does not drink anymore, he does not hang around with just anyone and he doesn't go to bars."⁹²

Of course, for the Ustasha woman, true submissiveness to the man was reserved for the Poglavnik who, like Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany, in propaganda was portrayed as the romantic fantasy and real husband for women as well as the father of all their children.⁹³ There are at least three eyewitness accounts of women who travelled from their local provincial lodges to meet the Poglavnik. We know that Pavelić met delegations of women relatively regularly since these meetings were reported in the national press. However, they were usually written by state journalists in a bland official style. In the three meetings recorded in the official Ustasha women's journal, participants tell the story. On the first two visits in 1944, women visited Pavelić at the Sabor and on the third occasion a busload of women travelled to meet him at his personal Zagreb residence in March 1945, just two months before the collapse of the State. In two of the accounts, he was talked about as if he were their husband. In the first, the writer recorded: "Gathered in the hall of the Sabor, we waited for our dear Poglavnik to see and hear Him which was our longed-for and most desired wish. Then He came in accompanied, but we had eyes only for Him." In the third, total surrender to him is expressed: "Our eyes drank in every line of His face, we accompanied every movement of His, we swallowed His words and we felt how great he is, how near to us he is. Without words, we seek in Him relief for our pain, encouragement for our fear, help in our difficulty. Poglavnik, we will follow you!"⁹⁴ It appears that however women behaved with their husbands, sons and colleagues, with the Poglavnik, they were always the submissive wife.

In Haris Seitz-Oršanić's account of meeting the Poglavnik in October 1944, with a group of other Ustasha Lodge women, she made mention of the women she had travelled with. They were women from all walks of life: peasants, city women, young and old. It seems that these lodges at the very last gave women from very

different backgrounds the chance to get to know each other and share their experiences. At Ustasha women's Lodges, a member learnt to sew, to be hygienic and how to influence her husband, but also it was her task to ensure that the "cult" of the domestic hearth and the idea of a social conscience were spread, to aid the poor and wounded, to "keep vigil" over the contents of books, radios, newspapers and other propaganda tools and keep youth away from "atheism, indolence, exhaustion and despair." Educated and middle-class women in the Lodges were also to elevate peasant and working-class women by teaching them "taste" and "delicacy."⁹⁵ The ambiguous nature of the women's Lodges reflected the ambivalent attitude of the Ustashes towards the role of women in society. Although the Ustashes argued that women in Yugoslavia had abandoned their family duties in favour of a career, they also believed that some careers were suitable for women: these included medicine, education and writing. Despite the seemingly limited career options available for women in the Independent State of Croatia, or perhaps because of it, an entire new generation of Croatian women writers found their voice since writing was one of the few careers in which they were encouraged. Indeed, one could argue that in literature they were allowed to be the equal of men in a way not permissible in public life. Perhaps this was due to the fact that writing allowed women anonymity and, as the novelist Zdenka Jušić-Šeunik pointed out, it was often hard to tell if a story had been written by a male or female. However, even in the literary sphere, she detected a certain sexist attitude towards the presence of females. Women's literature, she wrote, is "frequently portrayed as something separate from artistic life generally, which succumbs to a special gentle criterion in the hands of some critics. Yet it appears paradoxically the case that often the demands of critics become much stricter in regard to the creations of women, meaning she must produce something much better to be accepted as a collaborator in the field."⁹⁶

Quite what Jušić-Šeunik meant was demonstrated by the reception to Mara Švel-Garmiršek's collection of short stories about the lives of Slavonian women, *Portreti nepoznatih žena* (Portraits of Unknown Women, 1942). Švel-Garmiršek had already that year written a patriotic-political novel written in a social-realist

style, *Hrast* (The Oak), which glorified the Ustasha struggle in the former Yugoslavia and the coming of the revolution. She had also previously written a well-received novel about peasants in Slavonia. The stories in *Portreti* focused on the role decisions had played in women's lives. In one story, an old woman who as a young girl had given birth to an illegitimate baby has to keep it a secret her entire life for the shame it would cause. In another, a woman gives up a career as an artist to marry a man she loves only to discover much later that she does not love him anymore. During the course of the story, she decides that in order to get her own life back she must get divorced but then changes her mind after a conversation with her son, home from university for the holidays. She sacrifices her personal happiness for the damage it would do to her family. In the most striking story, a young medical student, Ranka, must forfeit her happiness with a young doctor she is in love with. This is because, as a young student, feeling alienated by the freedom and liberalism of life in the big city, she embarked on an unhappy love affair which resulted in an abortion. In a pivotal scene at a party, the young doctor declares that he could never marry a woman with a past: "The woman is the centre of the family. A wife and a mother must be pure and then she will be capable of creating a happy home. A man by his very nature is more vulgar and he cleanses himself in union with a pure woman."⁹⁷ Although she wishes to be a doctor, an ambition her mother does not understand – "It is nice to enrol at university, but that is enough: you don't need to torture yourself," she comments in exasperation – she is willing to give up medicine for him. After the conversation at the party, Ranka realises this is not possible and visits the hospital to tell him that although she likes him, she is dedicated to her study and asks if they can still be friends. Ranka's mother, who had secretly hoped they would marry, exclaims: "I don't believe in friendship between a beautiful young woman and a respectable young man. These are all just modern phrases." At the conclusion of the novel we learn that Ranka has returned heartbroken to university and her studies.⁹⁸

Although Švel-Garmiršek claimed that her stories were all based on the true experiences of women she knew and although all her short stories seemed to bear

the central message that women should live with the mistakes they had made and sacrifice their personal happiness for the sake of others, her collection of short stories received negative reviews. Stanko Gasparović, for example, labelled *Portreti* a disappointing book full of “sentimental illusions without analysis.” New Croatian literature needed to be connected to “national, political and cultural life,” producing interesting stories chronicling “our contemporary life.” Yet *Portreti*, he concluded, was “neither contemporary or interesting” but rather “a remnant of the romantic novels of the nineteenth century which has no place in the twentieth.”⁹⁹ Švel-Garmiršek’s collection of short stories, it is true, did not address contemporary political life in Croatia and they were sentimental to say the least. Yet it is likely that Gasparović’s negative review of the stories stemmed less from a concern about the relevancy of her stories and more from the fact that in her stories, Švel-Garmiršek was broaching controversial, even taboo, subjects. In almost all of the stories, women were depicted having a life outside the home and family and in some cases – as in the stories concerning abortion and divorce – were contemplating living outside of it permanently. Whatever criticisms could be made of Švel-Garmiršek’s stories, which were, as Gasparović correctly pointed out, trite, at least in her writing, she was attempting to confront the reality of women’s everyday lives, not the idealised fantasy.

Elsewhere in popular art and culture, the cult of the mother reigned. In poetry anthologies, writers and poets nostalgically recalled their mothers as gentle and pure creatures, selfless in their care of their children.¹⁰⁰ However, poems about mothers also reflected the darker aspects of maternity – the sacrifice, loss and suffering of motherhood. In 1941, an anthology of poetry devoted to the Croatian mother addressed themes such as abandonment, matricide, bereavement and suicide.¹⁰¹ One of its editors, Sida Kosutić, wrote in her introduction to the anthology that the first time a mother looked into the cradle she abandoned the “sumptuous luxury of her femininity, broke her sacred and silent oath and would sacrifice her beauty, her health and even her life” if it is needed for her child. Kosutić called this “the philosophy of maternal sacrifice.”¹⁰² The Ustashes argued that the maternal love which God had placed in the “weak bosoms” of women was

the strongest element in the world. Only death, it was said, was stronger.¹⁰³ It appears that the bond between mother and son in the Ustasha state was excessively strong, if the literature and poetry produced on the subject is an indication. In the same way that they wrote poems about comrades full of intense emotional feeling, Ustasha soldiers also wrote poetry to their mothers which might have been more suitable for wives or lovers. Wrote one: "And you mother, in this moment/are my dearest thought-/To you, mother, all these words/from my heart I have written down in blood...You eternally think of me/you live for me – and this life/I know you would give for me."¹⁰⁴ Likewise in Antun Bonafačić's short story, *Spomenik* (The Monument, 1942), the young Ustasha colonel links his love of the homeland to his oedipal feelings: "Our battle is self-defence, a battle for naked life, a battle for the Croatia in which we were brought up, a battle for all that is holy to us. I love my homeland and am as much attached to it as my own mother. I am a man who really cannot be separated from his mother."¹⁰⁵

However, this oedipal love explored in literature, although no doubt intensified by the conditions of war, reflected another aspect, as far as the Ustashas were concerned, of the mother. In the Ustasha Movement's poems and songs, the mother played a pivotal role. In the Ustasha anthem, the brave young Ustasha perishes on the battlefield telling his comrades to inform his mother that he died a hero so she should not cry for him; in another song, the mother visits the grave of her dead Ustasha son only to be told by him from beyond the grave to stop weeping because he died heroically. When the commander of the Poglavnik's personal bodyguard militia, Krunoslav Devčić, died in battle with the Partisans, it was said that he and his mother, Manda Devčić loved each other with "warm and indestructible passion."¹⁰⁶ Yet at the same time, the stories of the bond of Krune Devčić and his mother also emphasised the role she had played in his militant outlook on life. When her son wrote her a letter from the Isle of Lipari where he was in exile with the other Ustashas saying he was lonely and he missed her, she wrote back to tell him to be a man and not give up so easily. She would only welcome him back if he was carrying a Ustasha banner in a free Croatia. Manda Devčić was the mother of two other Ustashas, including Stipe Devčić, who had

died in the raid on the village of Brušani in 1932 when he had blown himself up with a hand grenade to avoid capture by Yugoslav gendarmes. As a consequence, she had been persecuted by the Yugoslav authorities, so Ustasha propaganda claimed. Like the mothers of Marko Hranilović and Matija Soldin, in a nationalist state which prided itself on being a contemporary Sparta, she became a fierce Spartan matron, demanding death and honour on the battlefield from her son and she was honoured as “a female warrior” and “a comrade of the Velebit Ustashes.” In interviews, she talked with pride of how she gave birth, fed and brought up Ustashes passing her ardent warrior spirit onto her sons.¹⁰⁷ Talking of Krune, her favourite and youngest son, she said with pride: “I gave him to the Poglavnik when he was just seventeen and I gave him to the Croatian homeland when I gave birth to him. I knew then that I had given him to a battle for the homeland. And every day I was prepared to hear that my Krune had died. And when I hear this now, I hear that which I had long hoped for. Tell me only if he fell as a hero, that he fell in battle!”¹⁰⁸

The ardent Ustasha mother become such a stereotype she was eventually celebrated in epic poetry. The most well-known artistic evocation of the fierce Ustasha mother came from the pen of Vinko Nikolić. His ballad of 1942 was a homage to Marija Hranilović, whose son Marko had been executed in 1931 for his part in the assassination of a Croatian newspaper editor and who was lauded in the Independent State of Croatia for her declaration after her son’s execution that had she ten sons she would want them all to die for Croatia’s liberty.¹⁰⁹ In Nikolić’s ballad she becomes a Croatian version of the Mother of the Jugovitches, drawing strength from his death for the battles to come. Visiting the grave of her son, she says to him: “If I had ten of you sons, I would give every one for the homeland,/ with your blood I would sprinkle the wounded earth/ for the earth here, the dear soil, I would fall victim myself/ so that the day of freedom of our earth soon dawns.” At the end of the poem, the idea of the Homeland as the second mother is inverted and the Homeland instead become her second son. She says: “Forgive me, son, do not reproach your mother/ that she loves the homeland more than her children./ Let the memory of you now rest,/ and from

your blood be born new warriors!”¹¹⁰ She will turn her personal grief at the death of her son into a bloody pietà of vengeance. Mater Dolorosa becomes Medea.

Women Warriors: Militant Femininity and the Ustasha Movement

Visual art – paintings, sculptures and drawing – freed from the censorship under which literature sometimes laboured, demonstrated that the Ustasha Mother, fierce as she could be, was not the only feminine possibility in the Independent State of Croatia. In visual art, woman could be the archetypal Madonna watching over Croatia, but she could also be a bourgeois lady of leisure, an old peasant woman, a wife, a young militant woman worker, a female warrior and even an object of sexual desire.¹¹¹ Marijan Trepše’s *Maja*, which depicted the new woman of the 1930s, was appropriated by the Ustashas to show that the new Croatian woman of the 1940s was truly liberated: in the factory or the field, with her white headscarf and ardent gaze, the new Croatian woman, in addition to her life as a devoted mother, was also an emancipated working-class heroine.¹¹²

Despite the cult of the mother, and the fact that the Ustasha Movement was an overwhelmingly male movement, women had played an active role in it even before 1941. Ante Pavelić’s novel, *Liepa plavka* (The Beautiful Blonde, 1935), told the story of Ruza, a female Ustasha terrorist who clandestinely smuggles bombs and guns for the Movement and is every bit as militant as her male comrades. The novel ended with the assassination of King Aleksandar, in which she plays a key role. Although the novel was fiction, like many of the Ustasha novels, it was based on truth. As well as a small number of female Ustasha émigré terrorists, in the main, the wives of leading Ustashas, in the 1930s, home Ustashas founded a woman’s section of the Ustasha Movement, Revolutionary Ustasha Female Action (Revolucionarna ustaška ženska akcija – RUŽA). Based in the Lika and led by Josipa Šaban, its functions included distributing illegal leaflets, printing newspapers and visiting imprisoned Ustasha activists. Yet these female Ustashas also carried out far more dangerous tasks. Not only did they smuggle arms, but

they also considered themselves to be underground fighters and, like their male comrades, were organised into cells and battalions. As with male members of the Ustasha Movement, they carried daggers and swore allegiance to the Poglavnik until death.¹¹³ Some women also went to prison for the cause while others had taken an active role in the revolution of 1941.¹¹⁴

With the creation of the Croatian State in 1941, some young women in the Movement, full of revolutionary fervour, certainly did not welcome its new decorous ideas about woman as mother. For them, the certainties of family life could never replace the excitement of their national and revolutionary struggle. Within four months of a revolution which was supposed to have wiped away all bourgeois codes of conduct, young women were complaining about the attitude of the Movement towards women now it was in power. For example, in August 1941, Bošiljka Perše, a young student of pharmacy, complained:

And now how can one think of a woman as an Ustasha? In most people's opinion, woman's work is in the house, in the kitchen, with the children, with the washing, at the neighbours, and not...politics. Will a woman raise her sabre and, like Ban Jelačić, strike fiercely at the enemy? Is a woman suitable for this work?...How many brave women have sacrificed their lives on the altar of the Homeland for the same ideal and with the same bravery as men have! If we take into account not only city women but include village and city together, then the picture is clear...The fact is, in the greatest and most arduous battles for the liberation of the Croatian nation everywhere there were found women who actively participated in the same Ustasha Liberation Movement. Taking these women as role models, we will bring up generations of Croatian women Ustashes who will be worthy women, true to the tradition of the Croatian hearth and who will be steely women Ustashes, valuing the freedom of the Homeland and its State borders more than their personal or family happiness.¹¹⁵

Judging by the reaction of Ustashes to the female question, the writer of this polemic article was not alone. Many young women must have wanted to go into battle with their male comrades and fight the enemies of the Movement, at least in the first few months of the new state's foundation. Indeed, the militancy of some Ustasha females seems to have become a problem and they were reminded that men and women did not have the same roles within the Movement. Thus in

September 1941, one Ustasha leader warned her subordinates: "You must be conscious that your work will be that of a girl, later a woman and you should not seek to place yourself shoulder to shoulder with men, in that field of work which belongs exclusively to men. Among us there are fiery militant female nationalists who would have achieved their life's ambition if they could put Ustasha arms in their hands and set off into battle. I realise this, but I also acknowledge, and with a heavy heart inform you, that this is not for us."¹¹⁶ Instead, women should be content to be the sisterly comrade of their Ustasha brother and a "decisive and brave" soldier for the Poglavnik in the home. She should not be sorry that she could not go into battle, it was reasoned, because in adopting the "crude" life of the soldier she would lose her "uniqueness and her precious talents" and become masculine. As the comrade of her warrior husband, boyfriend or father, she would herself be a warrior, "but with her spirit, not muscles."¹¹⁷ If this was not enough, the State's propaganda also pointed to the miserable lives of women who had gone into battle. Women who joined the Partisans were abused terribly by their male comrades and through their experiences developed unnatural impulses, eventually becoming barren and sadistic. In one well-publicised report, an ex-female Partisan told how the heads of women Partisans had been shaved and how they had given birth to sickly children often abandoned in the woods.¹¹⁸

As such articles often pointed out, women could not be soldiers because it did not suit their nurturing tendencies. Yet such articles also argued that if women went into battle, the family hearth would be empty. Since men were at the front, between 1941 and 1945, women entered into many spheres of public life into which they would not otherwise have been permitted. For example, between 1941 and 1945, universities became increasingly feminised as male students either volunteered or were conscripted for military duty. For the first time too, Muslim women entered university. Moreover, with men away at the front, women increasingly took over their positions in factories and farms. State propaganda lauded this outburst of female emancipation. The lone peasant women, ploughing the land while her husband was away "her muscles bulging with strength, sweat dripping down her forehead and skilled hands directing the rudder" set an

example which all city women should witness.¹¹⁹ However, there was also a new female worker, the Ustasha woman worker seeking “to return to a place of worth in the movement of the human society which was forcibly taken from her.” No longer exploited or submissive, she sought “honourable pay for honourable work. And she is conscious that Ustasha Croatia will give it to her.”¹²⁰ There was, the Ustashes argued, also a new kind of university woman. No longer content to be enrolled at university simply for the pursuit of knowledge or a husband, she did not engage in “empty conversations.” On the contrary, she was preparing herself for her future role as a female intellectual who would be involved in the rebuilding of the nation at war’s end.¹²¹ A whole pantheon of illustrious women from Croatia’s glorious past, were invoked as role models for the militant female peasant, worker and intellectual. These included Katerina, the last Bosnian queen or Vladislava, wife of Ivan Nelipić, who defended Knin from the Austro-Hungarian forces.¹²²

Despite its natalist obsessions and lack of women members, the Ustashes were not completely without justification when they attacked the position of women in contemporary society. Those Ustasha ideologues and clericalist thinkers who had lambasted the previous regime for treating women as decorative dolls to be valued for their looks rather than their achievements articulated a point of view shared by many women in the 1920s and 1930s in Yugoslavia. When the Ustashes criticised haute couture, they were not simply attacking it for its opulence and exclusivity, but also for its role in reducing woman to the level of mannequin and the way in which it distracted women from what was important. If women wanted to advance, they needed to abandon their addiction to beauty. Fashion had become, as one women’s journal pointed out, “a tyrant and a dictator and a crazy, unruly and unscrupulous dictator at that.” Citing historical examples of the damaging effect on women of their slavery to fashion, it argued that the tiny feet of Chinese women and the deep tans of Renaissance women was a badge of their oppression, not liberation. The eagerness of contemporary women to adopt the “ridiculous” fashions of today simply illustrated “how little taste and seriousness there is in us.”¹²³ By contrast, the willingness of young women to put on the

Ustasha uniform was an external sign of the demand of the new Ustasha woman to be taken seriously. Even if young men did not find it attractive, it was necessary as a sign of the worthiness of the new woman in the new national state. It was “something new, an expression of the spirit of our epoch.”¹²⁴

Not just female members of the Movement but also the Movement itself seemed to be embracing the cause of a more activist female role in the Movement and the State. For example, when the first female tram conductors began working in Sarajevo, the Ustasha press scolded male passengers who had mocked them and suggested that their behaviour would have to change because in the new Croatia women could do anything men could do. These female conductors were the vanguard of a new generation of steely Ustasha women.¹²⁵ Lydia Oswald, a member of the Hitler Youth on a fraternal visit to Croatia in 1942, confirmed this impression. She wrote with admiration of female Ustashes who spoke to each other like men: “the female commissars from Sarajevo certainly know how to get things done!” she enthused.¹²⁶ The Ustashes also wrote with pride of Croatian university female students, surely the epitome of female decorum, riding tractors and cultivating the land with sickles in their hands, a sight that “is something new for our public.”¹²⁷

Reading what the Ustasha Movement’s women’s and youth press wrote about female lives in the State between 1941 and 1945, it sometimes appeared as if they were moving into a new age of emancipation. Yet female emancipation was not perceived by the Ustashes as a permanent solution, but a short-term necessity while there was a shortage of man power with husbands and sons at the front. At war’s end, it was envisaged that men would come home and reclaim their former jobs from women who would again return to being housewives. In fact, so severe was the man shortage that by 1944, women were being allowed or conscripted – often it was not clear – into units of the Ustasha army. Some of these female military units, for example the Female Auxiliary Unit in the militia of the Poglavnik Bodyguard, despite their supposed “fanaticism” saw no military service and worked as nurses and carers for injured militia soldiers. Sometimes these female military auxiliary units were portrayed as a kind of marriage bureau:

militia nurses would surely fall in love with their handsome young patients, reports suggested, and make good wives and mothers for their children.¹²⁸ At the same time, the Movement produced a number of Ustasha heroines who suffered horrible deaths at the hands of the Communist enemy, dying heroically for refusing to recant their Ustasha principles. The two most well-known were Andjelka Šarić and Jelena Šantić, both of whom perished in 1942. Of Šarić who died in the Kozara Mountains, it was said that she had died with the letter U carved into her body.¹²⁹ On the one hand, it would be hard to see these heroines as representing a new kind of militant Ustasha woman since they did not die in the heat of military battle; both Šarić and Šantić were female Ustasha educators. Moreover, when Šantić died, her female comrades recalled her as “always gentle when she was with us – clear, smiling, full of sacred, sincere enthusiasm for the Ustasha Movement” and would remember that she had joined the Ustasha Movement after seeing the Poglavnik visit her native village.¹³⁰ Šantić’s sense of activism was acceptable because it was interpreted as an act of infatuation for the Poglavnik. As with Saint Thérèse of Lisieux who had desired to be torn to pieces by the teeth of wild beasts, to be boiled in scolding oil or to be stripped naked and flogged to death for God, Šantić was portrayed as a woman with a mystical attachment to the Poglavnik, her saviour and surrogate husband. In her last letter before her execution, she is said to have written:

To whom shall I write before I die? To my Croatia - my Poglavnik. Poglavnik! I have followed you and will follow you until the last drop of my blood for God and Croatia. I die willingly for the Homeland and for you, Poglavnik. I will pray in eternity to the good saviour for you, Poglavnik, and Croatia. My mother, father, Andjelko, Zvonkica, Viktor, don't cry. Your Jelka, an Ustashkinja with her body and soul, died for the Poglavnik and Homeland and that is an honour. Ustashes and Ustashkinjas of the whole of Croatia go forward for God and Croatia, for the Poglavnik and the State! I wanted the best, but others didn't understand me. Ah, my sisters, if you believed in God, you too would be Ustashkinjas. How unfortunate that many of you are wretches...I can't go on, the cannons roar and in a few more minutes I will be in eternity and praying to the Saviour for the Poglavnik and Croatia.¹³¹

On the other hand, one youth newspaper reported that she had died like a steely warrior with Ustasha (i.e. manly) endurance, secure in the knowledge that the Ustasha youth would avenge her death mercilessly and ruthlessly in blood.¹³² But other women who had demonstrated courage and militancy for the nation, unlike Šantić, were not permitted to lose any of their feminine vulnerability. Thus the first women to be militarily decorated for valorous service towards the State when they had saved the lives of a number of wounded soldiers under fire were held up as model women for others to emulate by the Ustasha women's journal. Readers were also reminded that their achievement was all the more remarkable since they were "weak women" without weapons of their own.¹³³

Some women did not see themselves as weak and enthusiastically took up arms for the Movement. In Srebrenica, for example, Black Legionaries led by Franjo Sudar were greeted by Muslim men who told him that their wives, sisters and daughters would be fighting alongside them. "And really, we met Amazons with rifles," the report concurred. "They were prouder to be carrying rifles than if they were the most precious pearls."¹³⁴ In another well-publicised case, a group of Muslim peasant women defended their village and farmsteads from the Partisans, guns in hand. The women of Fazalgić Kule, led by Derviša Jugo, became famed female warriors and Amazons and they were awarded the right to wear full military Ustasha uniforms. Jugo herself, as the mother of two sons in the SS and the widow of an Ustasha, became a celebrity. In an interview for Croatia's leading newspaper in March 1944, she spoke with pride of how she had instilled in her daughter the need for bravery and fearlessness and the reporter herself confessed that Jugo's story offered a relief from the usual stories about women which involved love, romance and fashion.¹³⁵

By this time, of course, the Independent State of Croatia was in a state of chaos and terminal decline. It was at precisely this stage that the image of the female as Amazon became strongest. Comparing the plight of Croatia, threatened by "wild aggression from the Balkan woods" to that of Greece awaiting Persia, women in the Movement demanded the right, as Bošiljka Perše four years earlier had, to take up arms and "abandon our propriety." A female writer, shocked at seeing

girls in military uniform on Zagreb's Ilica, now as she might not have in 1941, exulted in their appearance. "Their faces are fierce, tightened with winter and defiance, burnt with the wind, ever vigilant," she wrote. "There is no trace of female gentleness...War has given them a new soul and a new uniform. It has flung them from their hearths and ripped off their jewellery, all means of harmless beautification. All traces of the serenity in which they once delighted have disappeared from them as has boredom, dreaming and sentimentality."¹³⁶ The Ustasha woman becomes the Ustasha man.

CONCLUSION

The Ustasha Movement was a movement of men. It was founded as a body of patriotic men who would bring not only freedom to Croatia but restore the male pride of the Croatian nation after long decades of humiliation in Yugoslavia. From its beginning, the ideology of the Ustasha Movement, like many European fascist movements, embraced a cult of masculinity. As one of their founding principles the Ustashas advocated a return to the traditional patriarchal life of their forefathers and thus in the inter-war period, women had relatively little part to play in the activities of the Movement. When the Ustashas came to power in 1941, they envisaged a new Croatia in which traditional roles would be restored. Men would take up arms and defend the nation from bandits and Communists and women would return to the home and produce the next generation of Croats. After two decades in which democracy, liberalism and Yugoslavism had attempted to tear women away from their natural and national duty, they would again return to being what the writer Virginia Woolf once witheringly described as the Angel of the House. However, the scenario envisaged by the Ustashas did not come to pass. With the absence of men on the front line, women increasingly moved out of the home and into the factory, university and office. They became more and not less independent. In spite of the Ustashas' extreme

natalist laws and their cult of motherhood, women actually had fewer not more children.

However, it would be wrong to suggest the story of women in the Independent State of Croatia between 1941 and 1945 was simply a narrative of women, old and young, defying the dictates of the State. The Ustasha Movement had a somewhat ambiguous attitude towards women. While it believed that motherhood was the natural vocation of women, it also encouraged their education and intellectual elevation so that they could be more effective educators of their future children. This had the effect of creating a more assertive generation of women eager to take an active role in society. Moreover, in addition to eulogising the Croatian mother, the Ustashas also lionised the endeavours of more militant examples of femininity: the Ustasha mother seeking revenge for her son's death, the female Ustasha warrior, falling in battle for the Poglavnik, the independent female worker, juggling family and career and always maintaining her female and Ustasha dignity. As an anti-bourgeois Movement, the Ustashas' stern rejection of many traditional female interests such as fashion and beauty also allowed women to move away from stereotypical images of femininity while its emphasis on the artistic talents of women, particular in literature, created a sphere in which women could be equal to men, allowing new and unique female voices to emerge.

Yet, in place of real emancipation, the language of liberation was the Ustashas' way of keeping female ambitions and aspirations under control. As we have seen, women in the Movement after 1941, did not want to necessarily follow the path that had been laid out for them. They wanted not only to take an active part in the affairs of their new State, but also its military battles. They did not see themselves as the obedient and compliant partners of their menfolk; nor did they want merely a supporting role in Ustasha life. They wanted to be centre-stage. They were the equal comrades, not helpmates, of men. For his part, the new Croatian man was as equally ambiguous. Although he was to be the head of the patriarchal Ustasha family, the propaganda of the Ustasha Movement suggests that this was a role he was constantly seeking to avoid, preferring the company of men, revolutionary struggle and military battles to the comforting certainties of family

life. In fact, the new man in the Independent State of Croatia was less free in many ways than his female counterpart since while she could enjoy many different identities – wife, mother, worker, female warrior – for the new Croatian man, there was only one stereotype to emulate and aspire to: that of the Ustasha warrior.

By 1944, the State and Ustasha press was lauding the women warriors one could see on the streets of Sarajevo and Zagreb in military uniform or working as tram conductors or policewomen and scolding those men who still harboured arcane attitudes to women workers. After three years of the cult of motherhood, women seemed to have been granted the more activist role in the State they had sought. Yet, this eulogisation of modern womanhood was dictated not by any ideological shift, but by demographic necessity. With so much of the State in rebel hands or in open insurrection, and with so many men on active duty, the Ustashes needed to mobilise women. Whatever its utilitarian impulses, however, the mobilisation of women does suggest that the Ustashes' reordering of male and female relations in the State was not simply a narrative of dominant men and submissive women. Ultimately, it was the story of the submission of the entire population, both male and female, to the Poglavnik, and the domination of the State over their lives.

NOTES

- ¹ Pankhurst (1936), 219.
- ² Two of the most important studies of women's lives under fascism and National Socialism are de Grazia (1992) and Koonz (1987).
- ³ Mondello (1987), Macciocchi (1976), Meldini (1975), Frodossi (1989), 1105-82, Frodossi, (1996), 99-124.
- ⁴ Koonz (1987), 53-90.
- ⁵ See, for example, St. Point (1919), 38-51.
- ⁶ Evola (1938), 200-10, Ellevi (1939), 332, Pende (1941), 262-6, Loffredo (1938).
- ⁷ Pezze Pascalato (1932), 113-117, Panunzio (1928), 247-48.
- ⁸ The fascist cult of masculinity is discussed in Mosse (1985), 170-6, Mosse (1996), 155-75, Spackman (1996), Thewelweit (1987), Mangan (1999), xi-xiii.
- ⁹ Marianetti (1919), 370 and Marianetti, (1924), 548-9.
- ¹⁰ Jünger (1929), 30-36.
- ¹¹ See, for example, von Salomon (1931), Bronnen (1930), Dwinger (1939).
- ¹² Cited in Rector (1981), 31.
- ¹³ D'Annunzio (1930), 358.
- ¹⁴ Carli (1931), 39-43.
- ¹⁵ Cited in De Grazia (1992), 70, Pelizzi (1930), 96-99.
- ¹⁶ Baümler (1934), 30-44.
- ¹⁷ Gottschewski (1934), 38-45.
- ¹⁸ Brand (1931), 1-3.
- ¹⁹ Cited in Hewitt (1997), 82-84
- ²⁰ Macciocchi (1979), 67-81.
- ²¹ Mosse (1996), 166.
- ²² See, for example, Bokavoy (2003), esp. 116-122
- ²³ Marjanović (1918), 2-3.
- ²⁴ Kecman (1978), 23-56.
- ²⁵ Novak (1930), 623-4.
- ²⁶ Uzelac (1936), Crnobori (1939).
- ²⁷ *International Press Correspondence*, 10: 9, 20 February 1930, 175-76.
- ²⁸ Kecman (1978), 57-65.
- ²⁹ L. (1922), 1-3, Muradbegović (1922), 3-9.
- ³⁰ L. (1922), 1-3, Konconda (1921), 18-20.
- ³¹ *Alma mater*, 11 April 1935.
- ³² *Mlada Hrvatska*, 11 April 1937, *Mlada Hrvatska*, 5 September 1936.

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- ³³ Poljanec (1936), 806-8.
- ³⁴ Cvijić (1930), 375-90.
- ³⁵ L. (1923), 113-4.
- ³⁶ See, for example, Ujević (1970), 221.
- ³⁷ Herzfeld (1985), 3-50. See also Gofmann (1959).
- ³⁸ Marjanović (1913), 57-58.
- ³⁹ Bzik (1944), 40-5.
- ⁴⁰ Bzik (1942 a), 20, Lorković (1942), 88-90.
- ⁴¹ *Naraštaj slobode*, 2: 7 (14), 10 April 1943.
- ⁴² *Hrvatski narod*, 3 March 1943.
- ⁴³ Balentović (1942), 11.
- ⁴⁴ Bubanić (1942), 5-6.
- ⁴⁵ *Ustaša*, 19 July 1941.
- ⁴⁶ *Ustaška mladež*, Easter 1942.
- ⁴⁷ *Nova Hrvatska*, 31 October 1943, *Hrvatski narod*, 8 October 1943, *Nova Hrvatska*, 28 March 1943 and *Nova Hrvatska*, 2 May 1943.
- ⁴⁸ *Neue Ordnung*, 19 May 1942.
- ⁴⁹ Pavelić (1944), 5, Begović (1942), 120.
- ⁵⁰ Marčinko (1944).
- ⁵¹ Klarić (1942 b).
- ⁵² Jurčić (1944 a), 97.
- ⁵³ See, for example, Kršinić (1943 b), Kljaković (1943 a, c, e), Radauš (1942), Lozica (1942), Kljaković (1942), 15.
- ⁵⁴ Crljen (1942), 99-111.
- ⁵⁵ Mrmić (1944), 22-23.
- ⁵⁶ See, for example, *Nova Hrvatska*, 22 February 1942, *Ustaša*, 17 August 1941.
- ⁵⁷ *Nova Hrvatska*, 16 March 1943.
- ⁵⁸ *Spremnost*, 2 February 1943.
- ⁵⁹ *Ustaša*, January-February 1934.
- ⁶⁰ O'Faolain (1996), 135.
- ⁶¹ Bzik (1943 c), 23.
- ⁶² *Hrvatski narod*, 3 October 1942.
- ⁶³ Zunić (1942 b), 301-307.
- ⁶⁴ *Hrvatski krugoval*, 4 April 1943.
- ⁶⁵ *Hrvatski narod*, 1 April 1943, Križanac (1943), 49-50, 54-55.
- ⁶⁶ *Sarajevski novi list*, 31 March 1943, *Sarajevski novi list*, 2 April 1943.

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- ⁶⁷ Mikulić (1943).
- ⁶⁸ Klarić (1943 b).
- ⁶⁹ *Nova Hrvatska*, Easter 1944.
- ⁷⁰ *Ustaša*, 9 May 1943.
- ⁷¹ Balentović (1943), 411-20.
- ⁷² *Nova Hrvatska*, 18 June 1944.
- ⁷³ See, for example, Janković (1944), Matoničkim (1944), 27-28.
- ⁷⁴ Kojaković (1943 a), 70.
- ⁷⁵ Kojaković (1943 c), 68.
- ⁷⁶ *Hrvatski narod*, 27 October 1942.
- ⁷⁷ Kojaković (1943 e), 42, Antun Lončar (1944), 12.
- ⁷⁸ *Ustaškinja*, 1: 6, 10 September 1942, 10-11.
- ⁷⁹ *Crljen* (1942), 112-117.
- ⁸⁰ *Ustaškinja*, 1: 3, 10 May 1942, 10-11.
- ⁸¹ *Ustaškinja*, 1: 8, 10 October 1941, 2.
- ⁸² *Hrvatski narod*, 5 June 1942.
- ⁸³ *Nova Hrvatska*, 28 May 1943.
- ⁸⁴ *Ustaškinja*, 3: 6, 10 September 1944, 20.
- ⁸⁵ *Hrvatski narod*, 4 June 1942.
- ⁸⁶ Miloslavić (1942), 222-233.
- ⁸⁷ *Hrvatska krajina*, 25 May 1941.
- ⁸⁸ *Nedjelja*, 17 August 1941, *Nedjelja*, 9 July 1944.
- ⁸⁹ *Ustaškinja*, 3: 8, 10 October 1944, 32-37.
- ⁹⁰ *Ustaški mladež*, 3 August 1941.
- ⁹¹ *Ustaška mladež*, Easter 1942.
- ⁹² *Ustaškinja*, 3: 7, 10 October 1944, 4.
- ⁹³ One example: before the execution of her husband, Ustasha sergeant, Luka Biondić, by the Partisans, Katica Biondić said to her daughter, Mica: "Don't cry, my daughter. If you have lost a father, you still have a mother and the father of us all, you have the Poglavnik!" Rubina (1943), 67-68.
- ⁹⁴ *Ustaškinja*, 2: 10, 10 January 1944, 6-7, *Ustaškinja*, 3: 7, 10 October 1944, 6-7, *Ustaškinja*, 3: 10-12, January-March 1945, 12-13,
- ⁹⁵ *Ustaškinja*, 3: 8, 10 October 1944, 32-37, *Ustaškinja*, 2: 10, 10 January 1944, 4.
- ⁹⁶ Jušić-Šeunik (1942), 345-48.
- ⁹⁷ Švel-Garmiršek (1942 b), 239.
- ⁹⁸ Švel-Garmiršek (1942 b) 241.
- ⁹⁹ Gasparović (1942), 621-24.

¹⁰⁰ Alfirević (1942), 83-4, Kojaković (1943 d), 21, Kos (1944 a), 26, Matijasević, (1941), 42, Smerdel (1944), 357. .

¹⁰¹ See, for example, Polić (1941), Andelinović (1941), Štambuk (1941), Gervais (1941), Cvitan, (1941), 35-36, 61, 64, 76.

¹⁰² Kosutić (1941), n.p.

¹⁰³ *Ustaškinja*, 2: 3, 10 June 1943, 20.

¹⁰⁴ B.V. (1944), 25. See also, for example, Sukalić (1944 a, b), 5, 14.

¹⁰⁵ Bonafačić (1943).

¹⁰⁶ *Ustaškinja*, 3: 2, 10 May 1944, 21-22.

¹⁰⁷ *Ustaškinja*, 1: 3, 10 May 1942, 6-7, *Ustaška mladež*, 31 August 1941,

¹⁰⁸ *Hrvatski narod*, 9 February, 1945.

¹⁰⁹ *Novi list*, 20 June 1941. Interview with Marija Hranilović and Katica Soldin.

¹¹⁰ *Ustaša*, 30 May 1943.

¹¹¹ See, for example, Meštrović (1943 b), Kršinić (1943 a), Lozica (1943 a), Šeferov (1941), Mujezinović (1941), Radauš (1941), Kuman (1941), Crnobori (1941), Likani (1941), Lozica (1943 b), Mezdjić (1941), Jurkić (1941), Rački (1944).

¹¹² Trepše (1943).

¹¹³ *Ustaška mladež*, 7 September 1941.

¹¹⁴ *Ustaša*, 10 August 1941.

¹¹⁵ *Ustaška mladež*, 3 August 1941.

¹¹⁶ *Naš rad*, 20 September 1941.

¹¹⁷ *Ustaškinja*, 1: 6, 10 September 1943, 3, *Ustaša*, 10 August 1941.

¹¹⁸ See, for example, *Nova Hrvatska*, 1 August 1943, Rubina (1943), 21-22.

¹¹⁹ *Kroz ustaška Hrvatska* (1941), 26-27.

¹²⁰ *Hrvatski narod*, 11 June 1942.

¹²¹ *Plug*, 5 March 1944.

¹²² Katić (1942), 234-44, *Ustaškinja*, 2: 1, 10 April 1943, 20-22.

¹²³ *Ustaška mladež*, 4 January 1942.

¹²⁴ *Ustaška mladež*, 1 February 1942.

¹²⁵ *Hrvatski narod*, 23 April 1943.

¹²⁶ *Neue Ordnung*, 26 July 1942.

¹²⁷ *Spremnost*, 15 August 1942.

¹²⁸ *Hrvatski narod*, 26 January 1944.

¹²⁹ *Ustaša*, 24 January 1943, *Ustaša*, 31 January 1943. Others included Dinka Perajić, Anka Šimunović and Emilja Nagoda.

¹³⁰ *Ustaškinja*, 2: 8, 10 November, 1943, 6.

¹³¹ *Ustaškinja*, 2: 10, 10 January 1944, 3.

¹³² *Ustaski mladez*, 1 February 1943.

¹³³ *Ustaškinja*, 1: 9, 10 December 1942, 5.

¹³⁴ *Hrvatski narod*, 29 February 1944.

¹³⁵ *Hrvatski narod*, 30 March 1944.

¹³⁶ *Ustaškinja*, 4: 1, 10 April 1944, 4.

Martyrs and Warriors: Catholicism, Religious Imagery and the Apocalyptic Visions of the Ustasha Movement

Writing in May 1941, one month after the creation of the Independent State of Croatia, Ivan Šarić, Bishop of the Diocese of Sarajevo, recollected nostalgically his clandestine meetings with Ustashas in South America in the 1930s. He recalled the Ustashas he had met as “good and self-sacrificing believers, men of God and the nation.” For their part, he wrote, the Ustashas were attached to their priestly followers. “How many times have I heard our Ustashas say: ‘Where would we be without our priests!’” In their priests, he wrote with pride, the Ustashas saw a reflection of the nation and themselves.¹ Such faithful sons of the Catholic Church were they, he later wrote, that while incarcerated on the Isle of Lipari, they built a Church with their own hands.² For historians of the Independent State of Croatia and the Ustasha Movement, maybe the most striking aspect of the period between 1941 and 1945 is the contrast between the extreme violence of the State and its extreme Catholic piety. Perhaps the most shocking aspect of the Ustasha Movement for historians is that a State responsible for the murder of so many of its citizens should have enjoyed such a following among certain sections of the Catholic Church. While some writers have argued that the savagery of the Ustasha Movement was intrinsically linked to its Catholic roots amongst seminary school students and was a reflection of the behaviour of the Catholic Church throughout history, others, like the Italian journalist Corrado Zoli, reacted with simple bafflement and horror.³ When Zoli was told in July 1941 by a German army major that brutal young Ustashas, armed with petrol canisters and machine guns, were being encouraged by Franciscan priests with a crucifix in their hand, to massacre Serbian peasants in the name of God, he sadly compared their conduct to that of the founder of their order, Saint Francis of Assisi, who

had talked with the birds and the fishes and spread a gospel based on love, not hate. His inference was that the behaviour of these priests was inimical to true Christianity.⁴

Ever since its seizure of power in 1921, observers of the Fascist phenomenon had been writing of its religious undertones and chiliastic fervour. In 1929, Herbert Wallace Schneider declared that fascism possessed the fundamental characteristics of a new religion, describing it as a new cult which had taken hold of the hearts and minds of many Italians.⁵ Benito Mussolini wrote that fascism was a religion insofar as it was “one of the deepest manifestations of the spirit of man” and a “living faith.”⁶ With its emphasis on the suffering and martyrdom of its members, as well as its crusading zeal, fascism was steeped in the language and imagery of religion. In fascist theory, the state was the “immanent spirit of the nation” which linked the living with the “names of those who have died for its existence.”⁷ Historians of the fascist movement in Italy such as Emilio Gentile have argued that it represented a secular religion of death and sacrifice which appropriated traditional Catholic imagery— funerals, martyrdom, the communion of souls, processions and festivals – in the aim of creating a cult of the nation and State, with the leader elevated to the role of the national Messiah in order to gain the support of the devout masses. For its believers, fascism represented a new moral community which saw its followers as being like “Christian missionaries, lost in unexplored regions, amongst wild and pagan tribes.”⁸ Fascist regimes were rarely devout and the imagery of organised religion was invariably used for utilitarian purposes. However, as Gentile has argued, young people at the time of the First World War had been motivated by a desire to sacrifice their bodies and souls for a cause, any cause as long as it would transcend the wretchedness of everyday life. The rituals and myths born in the trenches, such as the symbolism of death and resurrection, the commitment to the nation, the mysticism of blood and sacrifice, the cult of heroes and martyrs and the communion of camaraderie created amongst returning veterans the conviction that politics had to be a total regenerative experience and could not return to the banality of everyday existence. The carnage of the War also awakened in many a desire for religious

feelings. Intellectuals and youth saw in fascism an answer to these demands since not only did it transcend banality but also sought to build an ethical state and a new moral community.⁹

In the Croatia of 1941 to 1945, the intense violence and the pious religiosity of the State were inextricably linked. The Ustashas used both religious imagery and rhetoric to legitimate their violence. The religious rhetoric of the Ustashas and their imagery of martyrdom and resurrection, sin and redemption resonated with the Catholic Church in Croatia. However, the Ustashas' political programme which was based on the concept of national renewal and a return to traditional morality also reflected the nationalist outlook of many Catholic institutions, including the Church. Just as the Church was eager to influence the Ustashas in order to restore what it saw as traditional Catholic morals, so the Ustashas aimed to use the status and prestige of the Church to consolidate support for the Movement amongst Catholics. The Church and the State were therefore locked in a mutually dependent and beneficial relationship. However, the chiliastic and apocalyptic language of the Ustashas was not merely a utilitarian propaganda tool, but was also derived from the devoutly Catholic background of many of its leading members, in spite of the Movement's secular ideals. In the Ustasha Movement, pietism, mystic nationalism and violence combined to form a secular religion of death, sacrifice and suffering.

Politics as Ritual: Yugoslavism and Ustashtvo as Alternative Religions

Like most ideologies, Yugoslavism was a kind of religion. It employed the same rhetoric of messianism, ideas of spiritual resurrection after a Calvary of suffering and notions of spiritual cleansing. Even before the creation of the State, Yugoslav ideologues talked of the future South Slav state as one "bathed in blood and restored in blood, baptised in fire and lightning" from which Serbs, Croats and Slovenes would enter into a temple of equality, brotherhood and freedom ¹⁰ From

the start, writers argued that Yugoslavia was not a new nation but an ancient one, which like the Saviour had suffered on the cross now to be resurrected.¹¹ In this new resurrected State, the Battle of Kosovo became the central founding myth of synthetic Yugoslavism. M. Bartulica called the cult of Vidovdan (the day on which the Battle of Kosovo was celebrated) “our national religion, our Yugoslav faith.”¹² This cult of martyrdom and suffering was famously expressed in the sculptures of Ivan Meštrović which contained strong religious undertones. For his admirers he was the “sculptor prophet” of a “crucified nation.”¹³ His design for the Kosovo Temple (1913), his single most famous piece of work outside of Yugoslavia, was hailed during the First World War in countries such as Britain and Italy for expressing the martyrdom and suffering of the Yugoslav nation.¹⁴ The Temple served as a useful propaganda weapon in the fight for a Yugoslav state. Leonardo Bistolf argued that the grandeur of the temple simply reflected the greatness of a race which had earned its right to an independent state with blood and tears.¹⁵ Although there was criticism of the Temple in Yugoslavia, Meštrović declared that Kosovo was “the crown of thorns in the suffering of the Yugoslav nation and in it is symbolised all its torture on its martyred journey through the centuries.”¹⁶

For Meštrović, the whole history of Yugoslavia was a record of suffering and torment, beginning with the death of Petar Svačić, the last Croatian ruler, in 1102 and ending with the Golgotha of the First World War. The Battle of Kosovo Field in 1389 had been simply one of many Yugoslav Kosovos. During the existence of the Yugoslav state, therefore, Meštrović’s work concentrated heavily on the divine origins and religious significance of the united South Slav kingdom. Images of Christ and the Madonna were recurring themes in his work in this period.¹⁷ State ceremonies too reflected the mystical nature of romantic Yugoslavism. It was not enough that historical figures from the Croat and Serb past such as Prince Petar Njegoš and Nikola Zrinski and Krsto Frankopan were appropriated as national heroes and martyrs. Between 1919 and 1925, their reconsecrated bones were paraded around the country in great ceremonies of public mourning.¹⁸ Yet, at the same time that Yugoslavia was creating a new secular religion, it was also trying to create a new established religion which would heal the religious divisions of the

past. A generation of radical young Catholic theologians called for the creation of a national Yugoslav church which would take the best from both the Croatian Catholic Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church to create something new: a church not “of dead dogma, but of living faith.”¹⁹

The Ustashas were not the first ultra-nationalist movement in eastern Europe to combine fascist ideology and religious mysticism. The Romanian Legion of the Archangel Michael, better known as the Iron Guard, was founded in 1927 at the University of Iași by a group of nationalist, anti-Semitic students led by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu under the tutelage of Professor Alexander Cuza. Intensely mystical and fixated by death, the Iron Guard believed that the Romanian nation was decaying and mired in corruption. Influenced by the traditions of Orthodoxy and the apocalyptic teachings of the Bible, in particular, the Book of Revelations, they sought to create a spiritually-cleansed New Man who would destroy corruption in Romanian public life, using violence to eradicate everything and everyone that they considered harmful to society. From its foundation, the Iron Guard adopted terroristic methods to achieve its aims, using gruesome methods to assassinate politicians and intellectuals of whom it disapproved.²⁰ As with other terrorist groups throughout history, the Iron Guard interpreted its terrorist activities as a divine calling. Like early Christian martyrs, terrorists used the language of fire and apocalypse; they demanded self-sacrifice and revered dead comrades as latter-day devotional saints; they led ascetic lives placing their commitment to the cause above everything else. Young terrorists also needed to undergo a period of hardship and testing in order to become worthy members of the future utopian society.²¹

From Yugoslavism, through fascism and extreme nationalism and imbued with Catholic mysticism and the aggressive tendencies of terrorism came the Ustasha Movement. Despite the fact that the Ustashas, unlike the Iron Guard, did not have an intrinsically religious outlook, Catholic imagery played an important role in their ideology. Like the Iron Guard, the Ustashas aimed to create a spiritually renewed New Man who would lead Croatia into a new era. As a sign of baptism into the new religion, an Ustasha took an oath of loyalty to the Movement which

he swore before God, a crucifix, dagger and hand grenade, promising to serve the nation as if it was a holy act and work for the salvation of the nation.²² The newly-sworn Ustasha promised to remain faithful to the principles of the Movement which were deemed to be not just simply an ideology but also a set of instructions for a moral life.²³ The idea of sacrifice played an important role in the Movement too. A theological student, Antun Vrbić, writing in 1942, called the Ustashas not merely a political movement but a moral banner based on “the self-mutilation and contemplation of the individual for the good of the community.” It was no wonder that many Ustashas had preferred to be “incarcerated” on the sunny Isle of Lipari where they starved to death, he wrote, rather than return to Croatia, their Homeland, and “renounce their travails.”²⁴

The Ustashas believed that after this period of tribulation and torture, they would return to the Homeland and liberate their suffering people. But the Ustashas did not just believe that Croatia needed to be freed from the shackles of oppression, but also from the chains of Sodom and Gomorrah. Croatia, they argued, had spent two decades in the prison of Greater Serbia subject to moral corruption and immorality, drowning in a sea of pornography and filth. The Ustashas would purify and cleanse their Homeland and enact a spiritual renewal. The Ustashas made it clear that this purification could only be achieved through purgatorial and violent means. In numerous articles, they warned the cleansing of Croatia would not be inaugurated with a prayer book or a rosary: instead they would use those “cold implements which have warmed the Ustashas in battle” – the crucifix, the dagger and the handgrenade, their “holy trinity.” As Mijo Babić warned in lurid detail in 1932, on the Day of Judgement the Ustashas would not refrain from killing because when the order to spill blood was issued, he wrote, rivers of blood would flow. Using guns, bombs, and knives, they would “cut out all that is rotten” from the Croatian body. “Those who drink the blood of the Croat nation should be slaughtered so that their evil never reappears again among the Croats.”²⁵

“The Cult of the Dead is the Cult of the Living!” Suffering, Martyrdom and Violence

In the Ustashas' telling of the history of the revolution of 1941, the liberation had been ordained by God. The language they used to describe the liberation of their Homeland was full of religious imagery. Croatia had been resurrected after eight centuries of Golgotha and crucifixion, they argued, by the Divine Providence of the Almighty. Had the revolution not begun on Good Friday on the 1300th anniversary of the conversion of the Croats to Christianity and culminated on Easter Sunday with the declaration of the reborn Independent State of Croatia? Even the hierarchy of the Catholic Church could not ignore that coincidence.²⁶

Such a State had to be remade in God's image and the fornicators and the sinners cast out. In 1941, almost immediately after coming to power, the Ustashas introduced a series of draconian moral laws by which the new State would be governed. Vices such as abortion, contraception and prostitution were banned as was swearing and the display of obscene images in shop windows, journals and newspapers. Begging was also outlawed and the new authorities launched a war against drunkenness, stipulating that all taverns had to be closed by nine o'clock, that no one under eighteen could enter them and that women who worked in them could not sit with male customers. Additionally, taverns that allowed customers to become drunk would be fined. Women who were teachers, or university students were banned from wearing make-up.²⁷ Some regional authorities introduced their own laws: for example, banning revealing swimming costumes, smoking or the wearing of make-up in offices. Ustasha leaders, such as Viktor Gutić of Bosnia, also introduced their own harsh sentences for vices like drunkenness. In Banja Luka, those found drunk on the streets or in taverns could be sentenced to six months hard labour and bars and taverns where such drunkenness occurred could be fined 20,000 dinars and have their business confiscated.²⁸

The law against swearing was especially harsh. According to the law, if someone was overheard swearing, it was duty of all authorities and citizens to hand the

offender over to the police who would punish him. After the punishment had been carried out, all “profaners and simpletons” – their term for those caught swearing – had to register with the local authorities.²⁹ The moral code of the State was based on the Ustasas’ strict outlook on life and their self-image as virtuous and chaste warriors. A Spartan, puritanical lifestyle was an intrinsic aspect of the Ustasha ideology and derived in part from the barren and harsh existence its members experienced in exile on the Sicilian Isle of Lipari. It also derived from the demands of a secret conspiratorial organisation to maintain discipline within its ranks. In its Principles of 1933, the Ustasas had stated clearly that all personal life was centred on the traditional family and a year later published its list of vices members were meant to avoid: these included gambling, chattering, drunkenness, immodesty and women, the latter because thinking about women’s charms would divert the Ustasha from the national struggle.³⁰ In 1942, the Ustasas also enacted a law which set out the duties and expected behaviour of its members. Arguing that faith in God and fidelity to family life was the foundation of a happy and healthy life, the law stipulated that only respectable and honourable men could be Ustasas. They would fight against an “indolent and frivolous” understanding of life and “protect the sanctity of marriage and the family and elevate the honour of women and mothers and defend the honour and reputation of maidens.” The Ustasas would reject “atheism, swearing, curses, drunkenness, unworthiness, disharmony, lies and profanities.”³¹ Mijo Bzik wrote that the Ustasha should be a role model for all men, avoiding “doubtful” night-time parties or “consorting in the company of dubious women.”³²

As a Movement built on sacrifice and morality, martyrdom played a central role in their propaganda. The Ustasas believed that a free Croatia had been built on the blood and bones of its martyrs. For them, the shed blood of dead warriors was a force more powerful than the greatest armoured division in the world. More than this, though, the Ustasas argued that their Independent State of Croatia could not survive without this blood: the renewed State was a mausoleum of the dead. For Nikola Šabić, Croatia was “like a splendid temple whose foundations are built on the bones of martyred heroes and whose rocks are lubricated with a

volcanic mixture of the blood and the sweat of the great multitudes.”³³ From this blood, a new generation of “warriors and steely temperaments” had emerged. The Ustashas saw the graves of the dead as possessing mystical powers. They were “sacred altars of precious Croatian blood” from which the dead passed a mystical power to the living.³⁴ Not only did the graves seem to communicate to the nation, but dead Ustasha martyrs also formed a mystical legion of the dead who guided the living and would eternally be with them. For Grga Pejnović, Croatia would exist as long as in Croats there lived the souls of this pantheon of martyrs.³⁵

The litany of martyrs in the Independent State of Croatia strung together, as one writer suggested, like the beads of a rosary or the prayer of a nation, was long and all-encompassing. It included historical figures such as Krsto Frankopan and Nikola Zrinski, beheaded by the Hungarians for leading a rebellion against their rule, Matija Gubec, the fifteenth-century peasant outlaw, Milan Šufflay, bathed in blood and exhaling his last drop of air as enemy batons split open his cranium and Stjepan Radić, the Peasant Party leader whose assassination had led to three days of nationalist riots in Zagreb and, so the Ustashas maintained, to the creation of their Movement. In addition, Eugen Kvaternik as well as Ante Starčević entered the gallery of Ustasha martyrs and heroes.³⁶ Some recent nationalist events and personalities were also appropriated by the Ustashas. For example, Croatian soldiers who had refused to join the Yugoslav Legion in 1916 as prisoners of war in Russia were honoured. Their grisly fate - after troops led by Captain Milorad Majstorović rebelled, they were executed and their bodies thrown into the icy waters of the Odessa Sea – made them ideal Ustasha martyrs and three of them, Ivan Iveković, Gjuro Dumbrović and Josip Poljak, were especially honoured.³⁷ Joined to them were contemporary Ustasha martyrs who had perished for the nationalist cause both in the Calvary of Yugoslavia and in the early days of the resurrected State. The Ustashas aimed to show an unbroken line of continuity between the nationalist heroes of the past and the rulers of the present. In over a decade of terrorism and State authoritarianism in Croatia, there were certainly many dead figures in the Movement to elevate to the status of martyr-saints. They included the Ustasha peasant, Ivan Rošić hanged by the

Yugoslav authorities in 1931; the Crusader youths of Senj gunned down by gendarme machine fire in 1937; Marko Hranilović and Matija Soldin sent to the gallows in 1933 for their role in the assassination of Toni Schlegel, as well as the numerous Ustashas who had died in the revolutionary days during and after the foundation of the State.³⁸ Although some of these martyrs, such as the Senj martyrs, had their own special day of mourning when Ustasha officials, the masses as well as relatives would gather to commemorate their deaths, the dead were remembered on All Souls' Day, 1 November, both a religious holiday and a State occasion. The date was marked by church services and commemorative journals as well as special performances on the radio and in theatres.

Soldiers did not necessarily have to die to become martyr-saints. The uprising of nationalist Domobrans in Jelačić Square on 5 December 1918, when a unit of soldiers had risen up against the declaration of a Yugoslav state, became one of the most sacrosanct dates in the Ustasha calendar. In the 1920s, nationalist youth groups had sometimes portrayed the rebellious soldiers as saviours, their bodies pierced by bullets and bayonets, the voice of their blood awakening the Croats to the danger of Yugoslavism.³⁹ In reality, there appears to have been scant popular support for the uprising: Croatian newspaper accounts of the time reported that there had been few casualties and that the rebellion had been crushed by Croat sailors and police loyal to the new Kingdom.⁴⁰ Despite this, the Ustashas presented the uprising as the harbinger of their own revolution. The Ustasha press painted a gruesome picture of a nation "baptised in blood" on that day with Jelačić Square strewn with the bodies of Croat sons. As the terrible introduction to twenty years of struggle with the "bloody" Serb dynasty, this day could not be forgotten. The Ustashas therefore declared 5 December a holiday to honour the sacrifices of the Domobrans. An élite Ustasha legion was named in their honour and an annual reception hosted by the Poglavnik. The veterans of the uprising also organised a committee to honour the revolution of the Ustashas and to reveal the truth of the uprising in 1918. For them, their actions twenty years before proved that while schoolchildren, "mercenaries" and Serboslavs had wanted a Yugoslav state, Croat men returning from the battle field had not.⁴¹

The most important day of mourning in the calendar of the Croatian State was the Day of Croatian Martyrs held on 20 June, to commemorate the date on which Stjepan Radić had been assassinated. It was a day on which all martyrs and all sacrifices for the creation of independent Croatia could be remembered. The commemoration involved the whole of the Croat nation and was a chance for it to come together in a show of national solidarity, prayer and contemplation. All shops and businesses were closed for this solemn day and black flags, signifying national mourning, were draped over public buildings. In the morning, a church service, attended by State officials and relatives of Ustasha martyrs and patriots, was held at Saint Stephen's Cathedral on the Kapitol in Zagreb to give thanks for their sacrifice. On the occasion of the inaugural Day of Croatian Martyrs, the widow, daughters, son and nephew of Radić were in attendance, as were the families of Soldin and Hranilović. At the end of the service, the guests walked in procession to Mirigoj, the national cemetery, which was also draped in black flags where, led by relatives of the dead and youth groups, a wreath was laid to the fallen of the State. Newspaper reports of the occasion wrote that with the creation of the Croatian State, the graves of the martyred dead were now at rest. State media also portrayed the occasion as a manifestation of the coming together of the masses. "The whole Croatian nation was today united in the feeling of a pieta and commemoration towards its martyrs ...It was united in its painful memory of the great sacrifices countless Croats made for the freedom of the Croat people in Greater Serbian Yugoslavia," reported one newspaper.⁴²

As the newspaper report suggested, the crowds who lined the route of the solemn procession to the cemetery were part of a ceremony which sought to emphasise the self-sacrificing life of the Ustasha martyr, a man who would go willingly and even eagerly to certain death. When, in July 1941, Mijo Babić, died at the hands of Serbian rebels, the commemorative issue of the Ustasha Movement's journal wrote that "every Ustasha goes to his death as if going to a wedding. He does not stop for his mother's tears or his child's wail...Thus, they went into battle and into death in their thousands, exemplary Ustasha warriors."⁴³ The image of the Ustasha martyr, an eternal victim, dying eagerly and hurriedly for the State, as

eyes lifted to heaven, he glimpsed Rakovica, was a constant motif.⁴⁴ It was also part of the Ustasha ideology. If we recall, the first émigré Ustasha martyr, Stipe Devčić, had blown himself up with a hand grenade in a raid of 1933 rather than risk the humiliation of capture. On the one hand, the death of an Ustasha was a means of communicating his dedication to the national war of liberation. It was common, for example, to read in Ustasha obituaries, that the deceased warrior had died in the throes of ecstasy because in dying he had achieved his life's desire – to die for the Poglavnik and Croatia.⁴⁵ Sometimes, it was written, Ustashes declared that they were happy to be dying for the State and the Poglavnik while being tortured to death by the enemies of the Movement – Serbs or Partisans. In one story, Ivan Kukuranović, a young Ustasha, was murdered at Petrovo Selo by a group of Orthodox women who surrounded him, stripped him naked, tied him onto a pole and then roasted him on an open fire. At the moment of death, he shouted: "I am burning and fighting for the Poglavnik!"⁴⁶ On the other hand, these stories emphasised the semi-mystical and religious nature of the Ustasha warrior: in countless reports, the young Ustasha warrior, tortured to death was portrayed as a crucified Christian martyr like Saint Sebastian transfixed by arrows or Saint Bartholomew flayed or even a mythic figure like decapitated Holofernes or Prometheus chained to the rocks. His tormentors were portrayed in suitably disparaging terms as savages and Pagans or Maenads, Medusas or harpies. Such imagery was replicated not only in literature, but also in sculpture and painting.⁴⁷

These lurid stories were used, as was the Day of Croatian Martyrs, to remind Croats of the inhumanity of the enemy of the State and the collective trauma of the Croat experience in Yugoslavia. Ultimately, they served as a pretext for the Ustashes' apocalyptic campaign of death. When the Ustasha press publicised the death of an Ustasha, slain in the prime of his youth, describing in graphic detail the indignities endured by his mutilated, wrecked body, who could not fail to be angry and seek revenge? When Antun Pogorelec, one of the original Ustasha émigrés, perished in July 1941 at the hands of Serbian Chetniks, the Governor of Bosnia, Viktor Gutić, gave an emotional funeral oration for the slain Ustasha in

which he demanded of the masses: "Ask these young Ustashas who for two nights have been paying their respects to their fallen role model, if they think of mercy or if their young souls cry out for revenge." Like Pogorelec, his youthful acolytes followers would continue "carrying death and destruction to the bandits until they destroy them."⁴⁸ Likewise, after the Communist attack on Ustasha students at the University of Zagreb in August 1941, the Ustasha Movement declared that it would pursue an apocalyptic war against all those who sought to challenge the power of the State. The Ustasha state, they asserted, had been born in blood and through blood and it would be defended in blood. Invoking the rebellion of Rakovica, the massacre of Senj and the prisons of Lepoglava in which Ustasha student activists had been incarcerated in 1940, Croatia, they promised, would be cleaned of the "Balkan trash" which had remained in the Homeland for twenty years as well as all those who desired to return Croatia to the oppression of some kind of Great Serbian state. The Day of Judgement, they promised, was near and their rebellion would be suffocated in blood, every trace of them wiped away.⁴⁹ Quite so. In 1942, on the eve of the infamous and bloody Black Legion assault on the Kozara Mountains, the writer Ismet Zunić vowed that for Jews, Masons, Marxist and Serbs, the twelfth hour of their filthy life had arrived. The Black Legion, led by Jure Francetić, he wrote, were preparing a burial ceremony for them in which the "raging whirring of Ustasha bullets" would be the funeral music and the dust from the ambush their graves.⁵⁰

The death cult within the Ustasha Movement was shared by ordinary soldiers. As already discussed, amongst Legionaries of the Black Legion, the most violent of all Ustasha paramilitary units and also the most death-fixated, its members wrote letters to their leader Francetić after he died. "You are not dead for us nor will you ever die," wrote one young Legionary to Francetić in March 1943, four months after his death. "But your strong and great spirit still proudly toils in the first ranks of our Black Legion. It enthusiastically conveys all your commands and carries your fighters from one victory to the next as if to say: 'I am with you heroes from the Black Legion.'...we are convinced that you are present during our labours."⁵¹ Božidar Brale called for him to arise from the dead "our Jure, so that

you may command the living from the arcades of immortal Croatian sons , how to live, fight and fall for the Poglavnik and Croatia. Stay with us, your eternally grateful Legionaries.”⁵² The soldiers of the Poglavnik’s Personal Bodyguard also often wrote letters to dead comrades. One soldier wrote to deceased lieutenant Božidar Baća on behalf of all his comrades: “Your death echoes with the voice of victorious fanfare and fills us with an indescribable fervour to never become tired! We will fearlessly follow you! Today this will of ours is stronger than ever! Thank you Bozidar! From now on, you will lead and we will never betray you: your Ustasha comrades!”⁵³ Among soldiers and Legionaries, the cult of the dead was also reflected in a form of death poetry. Its chief exponent, Kojaković, the young Catholic Crusader, combined Catholic mysticism, steeped in the imagery of death, martyrdom and apocalypse. In one poem, he sang the praises of the Ustasha, with “his frequently bloody knife” wiping out the enemy but who “only with songs/ went to his own death.” In another he saw himself as a warrior from a spiritual legion led by Jesus in a holy battle against the atheist Communists, the anti-Christ. “Let the enemy units rise/ and let the battle be terrible/ with songs we will perish/ for God and the Homeland!”⁵⁴

When Kojaković’s death was announced in December 1942, the newspaper of the Crusader youth movement to which he belonged reprinted the letter which he had left for his young wife, telling her that though he was going to perish, she should be happy as he had fulfilled his deepest desire: to die for the Homeland and God and lie next to his dead Ustasha brothers. This letter, written as he put it morbidly, on the day of his death, was reprinted again when his collection of death poetry was published. Yet for Kojaković, death was easier according to one of his Crusader comrades, because Jesus as well as his Ustasha brothers were with him at the moment of his death and, underneath his uniform and gun, he was a “crusader, a Catholic, an apostle.”⁵⁵

The Church and the Ustashas: Militant Catholicism in Croatia

In a speech of July 1941, Mile Budak expressed the view that one of the carriers of the national revolution of April 1941 in Croatia had been Catholic village priests. It was they, he asserted, dressed in their Franciscan robes, who had spread the “spirit of Ustasha hatred” in Croatia.⁵⁶ Although not an explicitly Catholic movement, the Ustashas with their mix of mystical nationalism, Catholic morality and village parochialism appealed to a large section of the lower clergy in the tense and confrontational atmosphere of the 1930s. By 1941, much of the clergy as well as theologians, the Church media and clerical institutions were articulating an extreme nationalist and, in many cases, openly Ustasha viewpoint. As Ustasha newspapers were quick to point out after 1941, the first members of what was to develop into the Ustasha Movement, Matija Soldin, Marko Hranilović and Mijo Babić, had originally met in the catacombs of the Catholic Church’s Chancellery in the centre of Zagreb where they formed the first Ustasha cell by candlelight; clerical youth movements such as the *Zagreb Union* (Zagrebački zbor – ZZ) had created some of the first units of what was to become the Ustasha Army.⁵⁷ Journals also chronicled with pride the deeds of individual priests who had either assisted in creating the right psychological conditions for the revolution. For example, a report about a visit to a Franciscan monastery in Bosnia, noted that its guardians, Brothers Hermann and Benko, had not only allowed meetings of Ustashas to take place in their cloisters but that they themselves were amongst the “most fiery and active” members of the Movement, spreading its ideals among the devout. Likewise, readers of Croatia’s leading daily newspaper learnt how the young Franciscan Radoslav Glavaš had come to the monastery of Široki Brijeg in 1939 to conduct a “life and death struggle” for the national liberation movement aided only by a handful of high-school students.⁵⁸ By the late 1930s, a number of priests had become sworn members of the Movement and had begun to take an active part in its struggle. These priests naturally took an active role too in the Ustasha revolution of 1941, helping to disarm Yugoslav soldiers and encouraging young Croat soldiers to desert. One

priest, Father Štipanov, on the Isle of Pag was alleged to have told his Yugoslav army captors: "Don't force me to take a carbine and kill people...Release me so that I can be a priest of Christ's love and peace...and not of revenge."⁵⁹

With the creation of the Independent State of Croatia, some priests became commissars for their parish regions. In 1941, for example, Father Ilija Tomas was made commissar for the region of Višegrad in Bosnia. Others became military chaplains for the Ustasha army while others still, such as Radoslav Glavaš, were appointed to positions of power and responsibility in the government, or like, Ivo Guberina and Miroslav Filipović, joined Ustasha militias or enlisted as guards at concentration camps.⁶⁰ In the late 1940s when a number of high-ranking Church officials were placed on trial for collaboration with the Ustasha regime, most famously Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac, it was common in both the Yugoslav press and historical analyses to read lurid stories about the violent, fanatical behaviour of Catholic priests in the years between 1941 and 1945. These included allegations that priests in the summer of 1941 had used threats and force to convert Serbs to Catholicism. Even if such stories were exaggerated, there seems little doubt that some priests did indeed take an active part in the Ustasha campaign of genocide. Priests such as Father Ivan Miletić and Don Ilija Tomas were feared for their brutality, their threats against Orthodox peasants and their rabbleroising speeches which aimed to incite their followers to commit murder and expulsion. The Ustasha press hardly attempted to hide the activities of nationalist parish priests and talked with admiration of priests such as Sidonije Scholz, one of the young prelates sent by the regime to convert the Orthodox, celebrated for his militant and fiery speeches. It was reported that when he died at the hands of the Partisans in May 1942, he had been reaching for a handgrenade underneath his cassock.⁶¹

Like other priests who had died at the hands of the Partisans and Chetniks, Scholz, a sworn Ustasha, was celebrated as both a martyr for the Catholic faith and an independent Croatian state and as a warrior for militant Catholicism. As far as the Catholic press was concerned, his uncompromising beliefs made him the ideal "missionary" in Bosnia amongst the schismatic Orthodox.⁶² The attitude

of priests towards the Ustasha Movement itself was similar. On the occasion of the first anniversary of the founding of the new State, Dragutin Kamber spoke for many members of the clergy when he wrote that the Church had welcomed the creation of the State with ecstasy because "hundreds of thousands of Ustashas" were the best Catholic believers. In the Independent State of Croatia, State and the Church were intertwined not only on the same territory but also in millions of human hearts.⁶³ For other writers the Ustasha was a son of God, his head bowed, carrying a rosary and prayer book in his calloused hands, gazing at the altar. "In the convulsions and torture on the cross of crucifixion of Croatia, a generation arrived in the world by the will of Providence. God's avengers, heroic and noble, who in Christ's name accepted the struggle for the victory of His principles and the freedom of the Croat Homeland." The Catholic faith of the Ustashas enabled them to die with a smile on their face as Christ the King "lifted high the Croatian banner baptised in sprinkled Ustasha blood."⁶⁴

The attitude of the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia to the Ustashas has to be understood as a result of both the self-image of the Catholic Church as a symbol of national identity and its experience in Yugoslavia. For centuries, the Catholic Church had seen itself as an institution of resistance to foreign rule which had kept the national identity alive. Many Croat nationalists recalled with pride that Pope Leo X had labelled the Croats a rampart of Christianity against the East. For them, the Catholic Church was a manifestation of Croatia's cultured and western values, defending it against the Balkan savagery of the East. As a result, Croatian Catholicism developed a crusading, militant nature which could be aggressive and, at the same time, harboured feelings of persecution. Missionary zeal and the conversion of schismatics to Catholicism also played an essential part in the identity of the Croatian Catholic Church throughout the centuries. One of the martyrs of the Croat Catholic Church, the thirteenth-century missionary, Nikola Tavelić, had perished trying to convert the masses in the Holy Land. Despite its universalist philosophy, the Catholic Church in Croatia was, like the Catholic Church elsewhere in Europe, very much a national institution, at least as far as many of its theological thinkers were concerned.⁶⁵

The creation of a Yugoslav Kingdom in 1918 was welcomed by many in the Croat Catholic hierarchy, despite the fact that Croatia was to be ruled by a Serb Orthodox dynasty. The Archbishop of Zagreb, Antun Bauer, was drawn to the idea of minimising the schism between the Catholic and Orthodox churches and bringing them closer together through the creation of a synthesised Slavic church.⁶⁶ This idea was also supported by many of the young lower clergy in the Catholic Church and coincided with a liberal reforming movement among their ranks which demanded a radical overhaul of the Catholic Church in Croatia. A gathering of priests in 1919 demanded a number of reforms including an end to censorship and Catholic absolutism, the foundation of a comparative theological faculty at the University of Zagreb paying particular attention to the Orthodox and Protestant faiths, the use of Old Slavonic liturgy, the right of priests to wear civilian clothes in their free time, the right to have beards and an end to compulsory celibacy.⁶⁷ The attempt to bring the Orthodox and Catholic Church closer also had the support of politicians such as Stjepan Radić yet the very fact that the Yugoslav Kingdom felt the need to effect a rapprochement between the two Churches was stark evidence of the way in which religion had the capacity to sow discord and disharmony.

By 1935, relations between the State and the Catholic Church in Croatia were at an all-time low. In this year, Archbishop Bauer had banned Catholics from participating in the 700th anniversary celebrations of the birth of Saint Sava, the national saint of Serbia. It was also the year the long campaign of the State to negotiate a new Concordat with the Vatican collapsed following protests from Orthodox worshippers and the Serb patriarch. The terms of the Concordat, which stipulated that children from mixed marriages would be brought up as Catholics and set aside increased funding for Catholic schools, angered non-Catholics who believed it amounted to Vatican interference in Yugoslav internal affairs. Yet the provisions of the Concordat also reflected the concerns of the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia; their spokesmen viewed the failure of negotiations as proof of the insincerity of the Government where Catholics were concerned.⁶⁸

The Concordat crisis of 1935 should be seen as only one of a number of events and issues to which the Church was objecting in the 1920s and 1930s. From the start, the Catholic Church felt that it was treated unfairly by the State and complained of multiple injustices by which they claimed the State sought to undermine the Church's position. Although King Aleksandar was keen to win the support of Catholics in Yugoslavia, his attitude towards the Church, as a national institution, was ambiguous. In the early 1920s, supported by Catholic Serbs in Dalmatia, he considered the idea of creating a separate Serb Catholic Church which would have taken influence and members away from the Catholic Church. The State was also accused of encouraging the Old Catholic sect (a group of dissident Catholics which follows the rites of the Church but is independent from the authority of Rome) to weaken the established Church. The secular nature of Yugoslavism itself, and, in particular its youth organisations, was also targeted. A Croatian Bishops' statement of 1932 accused Sokols of engaging in drinking and dancing, the promotion of nudity in physical exercise and performing plays with immoral content with the intention of destroying "propriety in our younger generation in the same way that they undermine and destroy religion."⁶⁹

Although there were still priests and high-ranking clergy who remained firmly attached to the Yugoslav idea, such as the Bishop of Buvar, Franjo Uccellini-Tice, as he himself admitted, he was swimming against the tide. Rather more clergy shared the conviction of Ivo Guberina, then a Reader in Religious Studies at the Philosophy Department of the University of Zagreb, that Catholics were being lost in Croatia through a deliberate policy of "apostasy and mixed marriages" as well as through discrimination against the Catholic Church in education and funding and the colonisation of Catholic areas by the Orthodox. Yet Croatian Catholicism was not cowardly and would fight a "tenacious" battle to save its individuality, its identity and its good name.⁷⁰ The creation of the Croat Banovina in 1939 was welcomed by clergy and theologians who applauded what they saw as its anti-Orthodox and pro-Catholic policies as the signal for a renaissance of the influence of the Catholic Church in education and morals.

The upsurge in Catholic militancy in Croatia mirrored events elsewhere in Europe. In inter-war Europe, liberalism was weakening and Catholicism was becoming a vital political force. The election of Pope Pius XI in 1922, who wanted a militant Church, energised Catholics. His encyclical, "Ubi arcano" of December 1922 called for Catholics to assert their values over the laws of the state and society. These values included defence of the Catholic religion, a communitarian social order and opposition to individualism and overt capitalism. Pope Pius believed that Catholicism held the solution to the world's problems which would be solved with the reestablishment of the Kingdom of Christ. Thus he rejected democracy and in his "Quadragesimo anno 1931" endorsed the corporate state.⁷¹ Throughout the 1920s and 1930s there was an upsurge in pilgrimages, parades and Marian processions. A younger more radicalised generation of clergy, laity and Catholic youth organisations was emerging. At universities, the influence of the Catholic intelligentsia was creating militant young Catholics who argued that secular society had led the world to disaster and that only a return to Catholic society could save it. Catholic Action, founded as a pan-European organisation in 1930, was to lead the battle to reclaim Catholic values.⁷² The Croatian version of this organisation, *Katolicka akcija*, was founded in 1934. The aim of the organisation was to gather all Catholic organisations under one banner and submit them to the control of the Church hierarchy. Various organisations were created for different groups of Croatian Catholics, including Catholic workers and youth organisations. However, radical Catholic youth organisations such as the Great Brotherhood and Sisterhood of Crusaders, did not submit to this umbrella organisation and instead the nationalist young men and women who comprised societies like these pursued an even more militant and aggressive form of national Catholicism, despite the fact that Catholic Action had been established to keep Catholic youth outside and away from extremist politics.

A reader of the clericalist press in 1941 could have been forgiven for thinking that the Church rather than the Ustashas had come to power in Croatia such was the fervour and enthusiasm for the new regime. Alojze Stepinac, the Archbishop of Zagreb, ordered a Te Deum to be sung in all churches on 5 May to celebrate the

foundation of the State and proclaimed the Independent State of Croatia the “voices of Christ’s angels” and the desire of all Croats. “Is it necessary to state that our blood flows more quickly in our veins, that in our chests our hearts beat more fervently?” he asked. Love towards one’s nation, he declared, was written with God’s hand and was God’s command.⁷³ It was a reward, Stjepan Krivosoc, the president of the Union of Spiritual Youth, declared in an audience of seminary students with the Poglavnik, from the Almighty for the many sacrifices that Croatia had made for the protection of his Holy Son.⁷⁴ Many Catholic clergy and writers hoped that in the new Croatia, the Catholic Church would regain its old power and influence. Stepinac assumed that the Ustashas would demonstrate “complete understanding and support” for the Church’s right to freely deliver the “incontestable principles of eternal Truth and Justice.”⁷⁵ Dr Janko Penić, the editor of a Catholic journal, writing six months after the creation of the State, also wrote confidently of how the “traditional heavenly authority” of the Church had been restored. The days when “Jewish-Communist-Great Serb propaganda” was directed at the Church and its priests portrayed as “a rabble and excrement of human society guilty for all the evil and misfortune” was over now that the power in the State was in the hands of the Ustashas, faithful sons of the Church. Catholic writers also saw a future in which Croatian families would rediscover their love for the Church and give their sons to be educated in seminaries.⁷⁶ There is no doubt that there was a shortage of suitable or willing candidates for the priesthood in the Croatia inherited by the Ustashas in 1941. Evelyn Waugh, the Catholic novelist and war correspondent, blamed the extreme behaviour of the lower clergy, in particular the Franciscans, on the security and easy life the Order offered its members as well as the comparative prestige clergy held in Croatian society. This, he believed, had attracted entirely unsuitable candidates, youths who were susceptible to the Ustasha ideology, an ideology they had then passed onto their pupils.⁷⁷ However, Catholic newspapers blamed it on a lack of honourable families in Croatia, a result of two decades of a secular philosophy which had destroyed a Christian spirit in Croatian families and replaced it with abortion, onanism and indolence.⁷⁸

For the Catholic Church, theologians and its institutions and journals, the return to traditional morality was the most important and attractive aspect of the new Croatia. Although the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was politically authoritarian, it was also, as we have seen, secular and liberal. Theologians and Church hierarchy bristled at the changes in sex and society, and portrayed a Croatia of abandoned wild gangs of children, aggressive women and hen-pecked husbands.⁷⁹ The Church was exultant at the strict new moral laws introduced in 1941 and just one month after the founding of the new State, a leading Catholic journal declared that after only a few weeks, a whole series of laws, orders, initiatives and announcements had been passed which showed that "the new regime takes the moral renewal of the nation seriously and energetically in its programme." The journal praised the "beautiful words about motherhood and sharp condemnation of abortion," the campaign against prostitution and "filthy and pornographic literature" and the purging of all "decadent manifestations in sport, in cinema, in theatre life and in the manners of the young." Noting approvingly that the punishment for abuse of power was the loss of one's head, another journal argued that the Ustasha struggle represented the struggle of western Christian culture against the "selfish phrases and seductions" of the Communists and all other national enemies.⁸⁰

The ideological similarity between the Catholic Church and the Ustashes was sometimes so close as to make it appear as if the Church was simply the religious wing of the Movement. On numerous occasions, theologians and clergy, as well as the Church hierarchy, would make use of Ustasha institutions to assist them in their moral campaigns. Although the Ustashes had outlawed swearing as early as the summer of 1941, as far as the Church was concerned it remained a problem and was still prevalent in Croatian society. By 1942, a Catholic journal was arguing that no country in the world, except Italy, swore as much as the Croats. Declaring that the paper war against swearing and profanity had not been effective enough, it called for the Church to lead a real religious war against it and create a movement against swearing.⁸¹ However, it was only in 1944 that Stepinac and the Circle of Catholic Men from Catholic Action led by Dragutin

Hren, organised a Movement Against Swearing. It was comprised of two types of member: ordinary members and a fighting unit, called the Army of Jesus' Heart Against Swearing. The Movement Against Swearing, as a crusading movement against bad language, declared war against profanity and annually organised a week against swearing to combat this foreign and "repulsive" manifestation. Its members also held meetings, handed out leaflets and gave lectures on the dangers of this vice.⁸² Yet its male members also saw themselves as warriors against vice. Bearing a cross and the slogan "For the Honour of God and the Salvation of the Nation," they patrolled the streets, arresting guilty members of the public and handing "incorrigible and insolent" offenders to the police for punishment. To achieve their aim of eradicating swearing, they had to directly collaborate with the Ustashas.⁸³

It could be argued that collaboration between the Church and the institutions of the State was inevitable. After all, they shared a similar language of purification and cleansing. Some members of the clergy believed that not only the Ustashas moral laws but also their treatment of minorities was justified by religious principles. Ivo Guberina wrote that the Ustasha Movement had the right to destroy the Serb minority with the sword according to Catholic morality because they were a poison destroying the healthy Croatian organism who would not assimilate. He called on Catholics to support the Ustashas on the basis that their ideology was founded on respect for faith, work and the family which in a speech of Christmas 1942, Pope Pius XI had affirmed as the principles of all social movements. Catholics should refuse to co-operate with explicitly anti-Catholic regimes, but as the Ustasha Movement clearly was not anti-Catholic, the Church should work with it for the "salvation of souls." It was not the place of the Church hierarchy to pick out the shortcomings of individual Ustashas, he continued, but it should select everything that was good in the Movement and elevate it amongst individual Ustashas. Rejecting the idea that the Ustashas could have sinned against canon law, he concluded that their "revolutionary work is in complete harmony with Catholic morality."⁸⁴

However, there was resistance to the Ustashas' agenda from the higher echelons of the Church as the nature of their rule became clear. For example, when it was apparent as early as July 1941 that some priests were joining Ustasha military units, accepting positions, as both Dionizije Juričev and Radoslav Glavaš had, in Government departments responsible for the persecution of minority communities or using unacceptable methods as the missionaries of the new regime, they were publicly rebuked by the Church's official newspapers. "Our young State demands that priests assist us and help us as priests and not as stozerniks (adjutants), nor logorniks (camp leaders), nor taborniks (platoon leaders), nor as povjereniks (commissars). Our mission is heavenly, not earthly," one Catholic newspaper wrote.⁸⁵ In the case of priests like Guberina, Stepinac wrote to him personally to request he cease all priestly functions in view of his behaviour. As the extent of Ustasha crimes become apparent, some high-ranking clergy began to speak out. Alozije Mišić, the aged bishop of Mostar, who had long advocated harmony of Serbs and Croats, voiced his disgust at the crimes being committed by the Ustashas in letters to Stepinac and, when he died in early 1942, he had sufficiently displeased the regime for the Catholic press to almost ignore his passing and funeral. By contrast, the inauguration of his successor, Petar Cule, an ardent Ustasha supporter, was covered in lavish detail.⁸⁶ As Stepinac spoke out in sermons publicly against the policies of the regime, no matter how cautiously, State officials turned against him savagely.⁸⁷ For example, when Stepinac declared in a sermon of 1944 that all races were equal in the eyes of God, thereby implicitly criticising Croatia's anti-Semitic race laws, the response was swift. Julije Makanec, the education minister, launched a blistering attack on the Archbishop on the front page of one of Zagreb's leading daily newspapers. Warning Stepinac that the same enemies who wanted to destroy the State also wanted to destroy the Church, he accused Stepinac of betraying "the best Croat sons" dying on the battlefield and warned him that "it would not be fitting that people who do not understand or have a feel for world affairs...who are lacking all political instinct" spread "political defeatism and political rebellion amongst warriors who with their lives defend not only the foundations of the Croat state

but also the Catholic Church from enemies who would mercilessly beat down the doors of the Catholic Church the moment these warriors were no longer drafted into battle.”⁸⁸

If some priests and high-ranking clergy were having serious doubts about the Ustasha regime, the same cannot be said of clerical and Catholic youth groups. No discussion of the relationship between the Church, religion and the Ustashes can be complete without a discussion of the Crusaders, the main religious youth movement in inter-war Croatia and, indeed, one of the few youth groups which was allowed to function unhindered by Ustasha control between 1941 and 1945. The Crusaders were founded by the Catholic youth leader Dr Ivan Protupilac in 1921 as the Eagles - a Croatian Catholic gymnastics society to rival the Sokols. A mass movement of the young, under the influence of another young Catholic intellectual Dr Ivan Merz the Eagles was transformed into a strongly Catholic organisation. Merz died in 1928 and in 1929 it was banned due to its nationalist character. Renamed the Great Brotherhood and Sisterhood of Crusaders in the 1930s and still led by Protupilac, who had created around himself a cult of personality, the Crusaders, increasingly came under the influence of Frankists and the Ustasha ideology and even the hierarchy of the Church became wary of them. Both fanatically nationalist and militantly Catholic, they were an extreme manifestation of Pope Pius XII's vision of radical Catholicism. Throughout the 1930s, the Crusaders engaged in violent conflicts and confrontations with the Yugoslav sokols. With the slogan, “God Lives!” the Crusaders called for “Sacrifice, Eucharist, Apostolat!” Mystically religious, opposed to all forms of liberalism and secularism and aiming to return Croatia to traditional Catholic values, they also declared a war against both atheism and Communism. Like other radical Catholic movements, however, social issues represented an important dimension of their thinking. As well as aiming to reverse the increasing secularisation of Croatian society, they also wanted to create a more equal just society free from economic inequality, worker exploitation and peasant poverty. The ideology of the Ustashes and the Crusaders were thus closely linked.

When the Ustashas came to power in 1941, the Crusaders, already among the most fervent supporters of their ideology, poured into the Movement's armies and militias.⁸⁹ Some leaders of the Ustasha armed forces, like Franjo Šimić, the Domobran colonel until his death in 1944, had been Crusaders. Some Crusaders were also selected for important positions in the State hierarchy. For example, Feliks Niedzelsky, the President of the Crusaders, was chosen to be vice-governor to Viktor Gutić in Banja Luka. When the Crusaders visited the Poglavnik at his official residence in May 1941, the vice-president, Stjepan Ramljak, talked with pride of Niedzielsky's "Ustasha duty" in Bosnia. While they hailed the new State, the Poglavnik praised them as being his most faithful followers who had worked for the Ustasha cause when a spirit of "slackness" had gripped most youths.⁹⁰

According to their new President, Lav Zinardić, the Crusader battle for the souls of Croatian youths had begun in 1929 with the arrival of the Dictatorship. In towns and villages in Croatia, like an army, the Crusaders had spread their faith. It was in the dark halls of the Crusaders' meeting places that many had heard for the first time of the Ustashas and been inspired to fight, with force if necessary, for their national rights. Particularly influential on the political development of many Crusaders was the gymnasium of Ivan Šarić in Sarajevo which so many of them attended. On the anniversary of Šarić's election as Archbishop of Sarajevo, his Crusader students published a number of articles to honour him. In one, a Crusader, looking at a photograph of Šarić and some of his students, recalled Šarić's theology courses in which priests at the gymnasium spread the Ustashas' ultra-nationalist ideology. He counted the many youths in the photograph who had died for the State, "their bones buried in dark Bosnian forests, their graves completely forgotten and unknown, covered in grass and unmourned."⁹¹ For the students of Šarić's high-school, the principles of the State did not contradict Catholic values. On the contrary, the eagerness with which many Crusaders volunteered for the armed units of the Independent State of Croatia such as the Black Legion, created martyrs within the movement very quickly. As early as June 1941, the Presidium of the Crusaders were requesting that members commemorate all those Catholic youths who had perished for the Homeland and

asked local groups to send details of the fallen to the central organisation, including photographs and details of how they had died in battle. By late 1942, the President of the movement was requesting that such details be sent to him personally so that he could honour all the “anonymous sacrifices” of Crusaders.⁹²

As well as their shared nationalist ideology and political collaboration, Ustashas and Crusaders were also united by a common language of chiliastic militancy. Like the Ustashas, Crusaders aimed at the creation of a new world. The Crusaders fought against the same vices of swearing, promiscuity, drunkenness and “free love, the destruction of marriage and the killing of the family.” Like the Ustashas, as believers in the “Eternal Kingdom” of Jesus Christ, they saw themselves as an army of the faithful returning the young to Christ in a “social Christian kingdom” in which they would be imbued “with the spirit of justice, social love and, above all, respect.”⁹³ The Crusaders also saw themselves as members of the most pious and moral of movements. For them, being a good soldier meant not simply being a faithful comrade but also avoiding alcohol, strange women and spiritual or physical contamination.⁹⁴ Yet their absolute faith also gave Crusaders a fearless and fanatical sense of justness in their cause, devout soldiers at the Front often requesting rosaries, crosses and other Catholic paraphernalia.⁹⁵ Crusader soldiers talked of themselves as the modern manifestation of the medieval knights of the Crusades, marching to their death doing God’s will. On the Eastern Front where they were fighting Godless Bolshevism, they compared themselves to Christian soldiers such as Saint Donat and Saint Eustace or even Merz who, as a soldier on the Italian Front in the Great War, had led “the most holy life” nonetheless.⁹⁶ Yet, at home too, they talked about their spiritual aims in terms of a war and 10 April as the maelstrom of a battle for the liberation of their Homeland from all enemies of the Croatian nation, especially atheistic Communists. Often their language was explicitly aggressive. Thus they argued that Catholics should fight usury, curses, the denial of a fair wage and veering from holy thoughts by building bunkers and trenches of the spirit and gathering munitions of prayers to attack the enemy. “All Crusader forces, all Crusader-soldiers must immediately mobilise for this great struggle and commence war operations! Brothers! Warriors! Crusader-soldiers!

Attack the enemy! The Battle begins at this moment! Victory must be ours!"⁹⁷ Finally, the Crusaders believed that they were, as Merz had once said, a self-sacrificing crucified army of God. With their persecution for their beliefs they hoped to become closer to God. On 16 December each year, the anniversary of the death of Merz in 1928, Crusaders were supposed to sacrifice themselves in a particularly intense way to God.⁹⁸

Although in the inter-war period, the Crusaders had been well-known for their violent tendencies, their leading intellectuals such as Niedzielsky also aimed to create a more just world. In his book about the new social movement, Niedzielsky envisaged a society free of totalitarianism and based instead on the principles of Christian love and justice. These ideas were shared more widely in the Croat Catholic movement, reflecting the emphasis radical inter-war Catholic revivalism placed on social questions. Crusaders like Niedzielsky opposed capitalism not just for its individualist qualities but also because it perpetuated inequality. In a similar way, Crusaders aimed to return the young to Christian values and away from a shallow materialistic life dominated by "dance, cinema and football matches" not only because it was decadent but because it distracted the young from contributing and helping their own society.⁹⁹ By 1944, with the State close to collapse, and in an atmosphere of apocalyptic fervour, social questions, so important to Crusaders in the 1930s, achieved prominence again. In the pages of the main Crusader newspaper, one writer called for the creation of a new social Catholicism. He wrote that it was necessary to build a new Christian social movement and to create men who would be heralds of this new movement, "a new Catholic and simultaneously contemporary socially-orientated man." Croatia, he complained, needed such a man to wipe away the last vestiges of its liberal-capitalist, bourgeois mentality. The new movement would develop a Catholic economic and social programme based on the destruction of inequality, the proposition that all men were brothers, promoting the interests of the ordinary working man.¹⁰⁰ Yet these were also the aims of the Ustasha Movement itself which had also been a social movement as much as a national camarilla. As

if to prove the point, in 1944, Niedzielsky, the champion of social Catholicism, was made head of the youth wing of the Ustasha Movement.¹⁰¹

Ultimately, it is not clear that the Ustasas' and Church's campaign to remake Croatian society was successful. As the Church's war against profanity between 1942 and 1945 demonstrated, the morals of ordinary Croats did not change much in the years of Ustasha rule. Despite the introduction of strict moral laws, the propaganda of the Church and the activism of Crusader youth did little to turn young people back to Christian values; in fact, quite the reverse. Atheism, bad behaviour and louche morals were now seen as a badge of rebellion. By 1944, newspapers were increasingly publicising the scandalous behaviour of adolescent boys, complaining that gangs of young men were behaving disgracefully in public places such as cinemas, theatres and, above all, on the streets, where they were making lewd comments to women pedestrians passing by. As one newspaper reported, "on some Zagreb streets and squares, these greetings have become almost an unwritten law and the youths use them in such quantities that not one female can pass peacefully by without receiving some 'compliment'...or 'impropriety.'" Such behaviour, a remnant from the Balkan Yugoslav era, was to be punished by the police and the culprits sent to do forced labour.¹⁰² Crusader youth by 1944 were also assessing the situation mordantly. Young people, they complained, had no interest in the Church and were abandoning it after they had left school and no longer had to go. In fact, in no period, had the enthusiasm for the Church been so miserable. Instead, they had been gripped by materialistic and decadent ideals. They preferred going to halls and dancing to "negro jazz music." The souls of these youths, contaminated by decadence, would have to be saved, though the Crusaders admitted they faced an uphill struggle.¹⁰³

As with so much in the State, campaigns of morality were motivated by pressure from below as well as orders from above. Indeed, sometimes, members of the public felt that the authorities were being insufficiently diligent in banning profane images in art. Thus, in 1943, Franjo Jović, a high-school teacher from Bjelovar, wrote to the Ministry of Education to complain that his students were being allowed to watch films which portrayed prostitution and nudity. Why were

children being allowed to watch these films, he asked, when these films had even been condemned by the Ustasha youth? He pointed out that a shocked colleague had unwittingly taken his son to see these films, although the reaction of the adolescent son was not recorded.¹⁰⁴ National institutions also often adopted a more radical moral agenda than the Ustashas; for four years the Church hierarchy, led by Stepinac, not the secular Ustashas, attempted to have mixed-sex bathing banned. As we have seen, local Ustasha authorities arbitrarily introduced their own puritanical laws which did not have approval from the central authorities. The Ustashas may have instigated the new moral course in Croatia, introducing ruthless stentorian strictures, but not only were their laws informed by the Catholic backgrounds of much of the Croat Ustasha hierarchy; they were also dictated by Catholic sentiment at the institutional and local level. The Ustashas, so radical in many ways, were sometimes insufficiently radical in their moral crusades for pious Croatian public opinion.

The Queen of Croatia and the Catholic Crusader: The Two Faces of Croatian Catholicism

The intense religiosity of the State, politicised and instrumentalised as it was, coincided with an upsurge in religious and chiliastic imagery in visual art and literature. The murals and frescoes of Jozo Kljaković, for example, showed a Herculean Jesus Christ suffering on the cross, talking with his twelve disciples or being resurrected and casting his Roman legionary executors to the side, helped by a fiery and fearsome Avenging Angel. These frescoes emphasised the Catholic nature of the state which was devout but prepared to use violent and aggressive means to punish sinners: the rich, the idle, the corrupt and fornicators.¹⁰⁵ By contrast, in the sketches and sculptures of Ivan Meštrović, the imagery used was not that of an avenging übermensch son, but rather, the Virgin Mary, the weeping grieving mother or tender Mater Delorosa.¹⁰⁶ The poetry of the regime also abounded with religious themes both in the early and the late stages of the State.

Early regime poetry exulted the Poglavnik as contemporary Messiah, the Second Coming, who had freed Croatia from slavery and inaugurated a thousand-year reign of bliss, a glorious new Jerusalem.¹⁰⁷ Branko Klarić, that mystical Catholic poet, wrote that "From old ruins grew a majestic temple,/ pride built it, blood built it/ and the flame of his heart."¹⁰⁸ The enemies of this new State were, he wrote, evil and the embodiment of Satan himself.¹⁰⁹ By 1944, with the State in a state of chaos, and destruction everywhere, Klarić was also writing poems to the Madonna to save his Homeland from suffering and apocalypse.¹¹⁰ The Ustashas and their leader, needless to say, were portrayed as a suffering, tortured army of Crusaders throughout the existence.¹¹¹

As has been discussed, the propaganda of the Ustasha Movement was infused with Catholic imagery which emphasised the Movement's aggressive crusading tendencies as well as its self-image as an organisation of suffering persecuted martyrs, ready to die for the cause. These seemingly contradictory impulses which, were, as we have seen, also present in the Catholic Church in Croatia itself, had led to sympathy within the Church for the aims and ideals of the Ustashas which enabled the Ustashas to appropriate much of Catholicism's imagery and many of its traditions. However, such was the State's appropriation of Catholic imagery and history on the one hand and such the enthusiasm with which some Catholic theologians, institutions and priests had accepted the new regime on the other that sometimes their traditions, language and imagery became inextricably intertwined to the extent that it was difficult to distinguish Church traditions from those of the State and the Movement. This symbiosis can be seen clearly in the two Catholic cults which emerged with great fervour between 1941 and 1945: the cult of the Virgin Mary as the Saviour of Croatia and especially her shrine at Marija Bistrica and the cult of the fourteenth-century Croatian Catholic crusader, Nikola Tavelić.

In Catholic theology, the Virgin Mary broke the curse of the sinner Eve who had fallen from grace in the garden of Eden. At the same time, the Madonna was a font of purity whose womanliness was closed to all, her sexlessness a kind of martyrdom. Her virginity connoted a stronger loyalty to God but her sacrifice was

also a kind of power because it meant she was unbreakable. The image of Mary changed over the centuries: first she was the Queen of Heaven, looking down serenely from on high, then a humble peasant woman, an earth mother. Later, theological writers such as Francois Villon reconfigured her as a Goddess of War: he called her the “empress of the marshes of hell” who witnessed the torments of sinners in the raging fires of the underworld.¹¹² The Ustashas were transfixed by the Madonna. On one level, as a body of fighting men, she represented a safe and comforting sexuality which they associated with their own mothers and her life of sexual denial replicated the Ustashas’ avowal of their own sexual and moral purity. Like armies and states throughout history, they made full use of the mythology of the Virgin Mary in their marching songs and poems, many of which were based on Jacapone da Todi’s thirteenth-century poem about the Virgin Mary weeping at her son’s crucifixion, “Donna del paradiso.”¹¹³ This showed, Ustashas believed, that God was on their side. Many Catholic theologians and organisations believed that Croat independence had been achieved with the help of the Mother of God. Moreover, the Madonna also became a kind of Croatian everywoman, tending the wounds of the Croatian nation: poets wrote paeans of praise to her as both the symbol of the nation as the mother of humanity and the model for feminine Ustasha behaviour returning love, peace and God to Croatia.¹¹⁴

The cult of the Virgin Mary in Croatian nationalism originated in the era of the Ottoman wars in the sixteenth century. According to legend, Bistrice, a village twenty miles from Zagreb, had been the site of a number of unexplainable miracles through the centuries which had saved the Croatian nation. Mystics and religious figures believed that the Virgin Mary had interceded on the nation’s behalf and in her honour, a statue was raised to her which, in itself, manifested yet more miracles. However, it was only in 1933 that the Archbishop of Zagreb, Antun Bauer, politicised the cult by linking the shrine, Marija Bistrice, to the fate of Croatia and proclaiming the Madonna the Queen of Croatia, organising an annual pilgrimage to the shrine. With the creation of the Independent State of Croatia, the procession to the shrine of Marija Bistrice was reinvented as a

pilgrimage to the source of the miracle of the Independent State of Croatia which had replaced years of darkness and the imprisonment of Croatia with the freedom of a Catholic Croat state. By visiting her shrine, pilgrims, both the masses and the political élite, hoped that the Virgin Mary would continue to protect the young state.

From the beginning of Croatian independence in 1941, the fate of the nation was connected with the benevolence of the Madonna. In an editorial of May 1941, a Catholic journal wrote that with Croat independence, she had appeared in the heavens to offer her thanks to the Almighty and to show that now, as so often in its arduous past, she was protectress of the nation, enfolding it in her arms. "She is again found on the banners of freedom and takes her old place: to protect and defend us as she protected us when our Bans and Dukes went into battle under the banners bearing her likeness."¹¹⁵ The first pilgrimage to the Shrine of Marija Bistrica in July 1941 was a time to give thanks for Croatia's long sought-after freedom and, implicitly, the new regime itself. The pilgrimage was used skilfully by the regime to reinforce the supposed Catholic piety of their Movement. Special candles were blessed at Marija Bistrica and then taken back to Zagreb by pilgrims where they were consecrated and lit and placed in a shrine of the Virgin Mary to replicate the alleged taking of candles to Marija Bistrica by Ustashas in inter-war Yugoslavia to plead for the liberation of the Croats from foreign rule. During the procession, five great candles were carried to Marija Bistrica: two for the Poglavnik, two for his collaborators and one with a picture of the Poglavnik to symbolise hope in the health and happiness of their leader. At gatherings in Marija Bistrica, it was written, Ustashas would pray for the souls of dead comrades who had offered up their lives on the altar of the homeland. The pilgrimage throughout the existence of the independent Croatian State was a mass ceremonial occasion drawing huge crowds to Marija Bistrica; large crowds also lined the streets of Zagreb to welcome the return of the weary pilgrims. The Ustashas interpreted the occasion less as a religious pilgrimage than as a public manifestation of support for their regime.¹¹⁶

Both the regime and the Church, for very different reasons, hoped to build a grandiose shrine and a basilica at Marija Bistrica which would one day assume the significance of a Croatian Lourdes. In 1942, Stepinac and the Church founded a society called Our Dear Shrine (Naša draga svetišta – Nadasve) to conceive a plan for the future shrine and to raise funds for it amongst the general public and the Sabor. The plans were grandiose: there would be fourteen stations of the cross located on the route to the basilica, made of white marble with a base of black and gold marble to honour, Nadasve said, “the Queen of Croatia.” The society also aimed to build a Calvary at Bistrica to symbolise the sufferings of the nation on the path to liberation and the return to Christianity. To those who objected to such lavish displays of pietism in a time of war and devastation, society members replied that “we are following our ancestors who, in the most difficult times, rose in defence of and pleaded for the Madonna of Bistrica!” As far as they were concerned, the future well-being of the nation depended on the creation of the shrine at Bistrica.¹¹⁷

The Committee members of Nadasve, for all their pietism, were hardheaded businessmen and single-minded in their desire to create the proposed shrine and basilica at Marija Bistrica. They aimed to raise money by selling trinkets and souvenirs: icons and statues of the Virgin Mary as well as miniatures of the shrine and basilica itself. They appeared to offer not only moral absolution to companies which invested in their project, but they also aggressively lobbied the Sabor for finance. The Ustasha Movement, despite the fact that it was not driven by religious concerns, was also keen to be involved and, obviously, take the credit when the basilica and shrine were built. Thus it was that in 1942, the Domobran troops of Slavko Štancer presented the Committee with a gift of 80,276,50 kunas for the building of a station of the cross from donations they had collected from the public, although it was not at all clear how this money was collected. Nevertheless, as the Committee declared, the Mother of God had throughout history defended Croatians on the battlefield and protected “our heroic sons who battle against various destructive elements.” Already, it claimed with pride, it had sent thousands of pictures and medals of the Virgin Mary to soldiers on

request.¹¹⁸ In 1944, in spite of the destruction and chaos in the State, the mass poverty and the fact that so much of the population was in open revolt against the Ustasha leadership, a group of artists under the guidance of Professor Krsto Hegedusic, were commissioned to produce a series of religious frescoes for the shrine at Marija Bistrica. Artists such as the peasant, Ivan Generalić, Ivo Režek and Josip Crnobori, who was ideologically close to the regime, spent months creating frescoes drawn from incidents in the life of Jesus, such as the Last Supper and Golgotha. Since art students assisting in this project were exempted from military duty it is clear that the Ustahas considered this project to be important. Indeed, although the funding for the frescoes came from the Nadasve Committee, the aesthetic tastes and ideological vision of the regime were ever present and the frescoes were a case in point. In attempting to combine pietism and contemporary artistic tendencies, they were a synthesis not only of the artistic sensibilities of the regime but also reflected the way in which the Ustasha Movement had appropriated the ancient symbols of religion in the name of modernity and progress.¹¹⁹

Between 1941 and 1945, the nature of the pilgrimages which usually culminated in a speech by the Prelate, Stepinac, changed as conditions in the State altered. The first pilgrimage to Marija Bistrica in July 1941 reflected the nationalist euphoria surrounding the creation of an independent State. In his speech in 1941, like so much of the clergy and lay institutions, Stepinac expressed the hope that a new Christian society would be built by the Ustahas. The national shame of cursing, drunkenness, infertility and “discord, hatred and quarrelling” would be replaced by a respect for the sanctity of human life, “the elevation of the Holy Name of God,” “sincere brotherly love” and “a sober social life.”¹²⁰ By 1942, the language had changed somewhat and the Church began to cautiously express its dismay that a heavenly kingdom had not been created in Croatia and that instead the State was in turmoil. In his speech of 1942, Stepinac in fact argued that the continued immorality of the Croatian people could be partly responsible for their awful predicament. Now there was no optimism. Stepinac asked the Mother of God to pray for Croatia and help it eradicate “harmful cursing in our nation” and

“drunkenness, unrestrained dancing and immodesty” as well as “curses, lies and slander.”¹²¹ As well as bemoaning the immorality of ordinary people in Croatia, Stepinac in his speeches also made much mention of the degradations of the Partisans; he accused them of killing innocent Croats and burning down their villages. Still, Stepinac argued the only way that the Madonna could intercede on behalf of Croatia was if it returned to God and prayed to the Queen of Croatia for peace and the safe return of our “dear husbands, sons and brothers.” To ensure the end of the horrors of war and hunger, Stepinac advised they should make a visit to Marija Bistrica and make a donation to the campaign for a shrine.¹²² By 1944, the occasion of the last pilgrimage to Marija Bistrica, there must have been a palpable sense of panic and mourning. Everything seemed to be falling apart. First, Stepinac railed at the sins of the Croats, claiming that the immorality of their lives had brought the wrath of God upon them. He mentioned people who with their “profane language drag the Virgin Mary into the gutter as if they were talking about women in a brothel” and women who had abandoned “all sense of shame or, rather, shamelessness in public baths and, frequently, on the streets.” However, he also sought absolution for the people, asking the Mother of God to forgive their manifold sins and save them. He spoke with alarm about the alleged crimes of the atheist Partisans who were winning over some Catholics in Croatia to their cause:

Our hearts bleed and weep over all the horrors which have reached our homeland and our Croatian people. Our hearts bleed over the destroyed towns, burning villages of our dear homeland which is the location of a bloody struggle. Our hearts weep over the destroyed churches and chapels, over the innocent murdered clergy and priests...Our plea to the Mother of God from Bistrica is: help us! Today, when the world is crumbling and a flood of destructive views floods the soul, help the Croatian people to remain true to their Catholic past. For two decades, the Communist philosophy has been urged upon the world. The Croatian people has up until now resisted it. Help us in the future to resist a system which recognises neither private ownership, the sanctity of the family nor the freedom of religious confession.¹²³

Croatia had a right to defend itself and it had a right to its independence, he argued, on the basis of its “bitter and bloody battles” in defence of human rights, freedom and, above all Western culture and the Catholic Church. It would never, he vowed, abandon this right.¹²⁴ This speech, reprinted in regime newspapers as well as Catholic ones, was grist to the mill of Ustasha officials.

The other important Catholic cult in Croatia between 1941 and 1945, the cult of Nikola Tavelić, reflected the crusading and aggressive side of Catholicism as understood by the Ustasha Movement. In many of their public speeches in the summer of 1941, Ustasha officials had appropriated the history of the Catholic Crusades in the Middle East to justify their own absolutist ideology. Mile Budak, for example, in a speech in August 1941, speaking of the measures needed to eradicate Serbs from Croatia, argued that the Church had led “seven crusading wars for the liberation of the grave of Christ. It went so far that even children joined the Crusading army. As it was in the 11th and 12th century so we are sure today that the Church understands the Ustasha struggle”¹²⁵ As a crusading army, the cult of Tavelić appealed to the Ustashas’ militant sense of destiny, but it also appealed to the Catholic Church in Croatia because it reflected its own sense of being a persecuted institution throughout history which defeated aggression and godlessness only with fire.

According to the highly romanticised biography written by Josip Andrić, Nikola Tavelić, a fourteenth-century missionary from a noble Šibenik family was a “Catholic warrior against religious errors” who had worked for the unity of the Croatian people by driving out all those forces which divided them. He had found his vocation in the late 1370s when, having got on his knees to pray that he could live only for God, a voice behind him called out “And for Croatia!” This voice then accompanied him everywhere on his travels as a monk and he accepted as his slogan “For God and Croatia!”¹²⁶ His career as a missionary began after King Stjepan Tvrtko sent him to Bosnia to rescue the Croats in Bosnia from Bogomilism, a dissident Christian cult imported, Andrić wrote, from Serbia. For twelve years, he attempted to convert the masses back to Catholicism, convinced that only a Catholic Croatia could survive and all the while praying to God to die

for Jesus. Andrić claimed that on many occasions groups of Bogomils had attempted to murder Tavelić in the woods; they also plundered the homes and property of Croats to prevent them returning to the true faith, but armed only with his sacred words, and sowing peace, love and Jesus' teaching, the warrior Tavelić had defeated them.¹²⁷ He eventually fell out with Tvrtko since Tavelić believed only Catholicism could be a "sure foundation of the Croatian nationality and Croat statehood." He warned Tvrtko he should not be lenient on the Bogomil sect because they were seeking to provoke religious divisions amongst the Croats and could one day become the gravediggers of the State. Ignored, he journeyed to the Holy Land and prayed to God that he would die for him as Jesus had died for the Croats. Arrested at an Arab temple on his first day of missionary work in 1390, proselytising for the Catholic faith, he was flung into prison and then executed for refusing to recant his beliefs, along with many other martyrs. Happy to die for Jesus, they shouted "We are ready to die for him!" and their bodies refused to burn at the stake but extinguished the flames.¹²⁸

If we recall, stories and obituaries of young Ustashas burning for their beliefs showed remarkable similarities with the life of Nikola Tavelić. Andrić's biography was published in 1942 and much of its historical fact was designed to appeal to the Ustashas view of Croatian history. Yet Tavelić's life had been appropriated by nationalists long before the advent of the Ustashas. Throughout the nineteenth century, churches and altars had been built in Tavelić's honour, but it was in the 1930s that the cult of Tavelić developed a more political edge. In 1931, the Church hierarchy, led by Stepinac, conducted their first pilgrimage to the Holy Land, deciding to build an altar to the Mother of God, Queen of Croatia. In 1934, when a new church was built on Mount Sion, the Catholic Church in Croatia donated an altar dedicated to Tavelić, blessed by Pope Pius XI. The altar, designed by Ivo Kerdić, was sent to the Holy Land in December 1936 and became a symbol of rejuvenated Croatian nationalism. In 1937, there were countrywide celebrations in anticipation of its consecration and on 25 July 1937, Archbishop Stepinac travelled to Palestine to take part in the ceremony. The occasion of the altar's consecration provoked new interest in the life of Tavelić. Stepinac sent back a

highly nationalist message to the masses from the Holy Land alluding to Croatia's special Catholic nature and its long struggle for independence. Other altars dedicated to Tavelić also sprang up, although it is not clear how many there were. The Tavelić altar was important because by awakening interest in the life of Tavelić, it also awakened the desire amongst many in the Catholic Church to have him canonised. On 27 July 1937, Fanika Engelman was recorded as the first person to experience a miracle from Tavelić when she recovered from a crippling illness after praying to him. Other miracles were subsequently recorded. With evidence of his power to perform miracles, in 1939 a group of pilgrims walked to Rome to petition for his canonisation. By the late 1930s, a popular slogan of mystical Catholic nationalists invoked Tavelić as a saviour and guardian of Croatia, just like the Mother of God: "Blessed Nikola Tavelić – pray for the Croat people."¹²⁹

With the creation of the Independent State of Croatia in 1941, the spiritual wish to make Tavelić a saint became a political desire too. In 1942, priests and laity from the Catholic Church led by Josip Andrić and Dragutin Hren, founded the League of Nikola Tavelić, which had the specific aim of popularising the cause of his passage to sainthood. They wanted ordinary Croatian Catholics to pray for his canonisation and for a fee of five kunas, each new member received an image of Tavelić. Local branches of the League were established throughout the State, many chaired by prominent clergy. The Mostar and Banja Luka Diocese League, for example, was chaired by Father Jozo Garić, Bishop of Banja Luka. Members were expected to keep Tavelić's image in a prominent place in their home and regularly chant: "Blessed Nikola Tavelić, pray for the Croat nation." Each time they spoke this plea, they would be absolved for fifty days from confession.¹³⁰ All Catholics were encouraged to be members of the League and pressure was placed on leaders of Catholic schools, institutions and societies to get their members to join. For Hren, whoever was not a member of the League of Nikola Tavelić was simply not a good Catholic.¹³¹ To publicise Tavelić's cause, the League began publication of a journal which contained poems and short stories as well as articles dedicated to him.¹³² The League also attempted to popularise Tavelić's

birthday, 14 November, since although the date had been commemorated in Croatia since 1937, it seems few people considered it a particularly important date.¹³³ There is no evidence that after the creation of the League, Tavelić's Saint Day was marked in a more devout or meaningful way, despite the efforts of the League and other Catholic journals.

This does not imply that the League did not have support or enjoy success. Many ordinary Catholics were keen to support the League's work and local Catholic leaders reported that demand for images of Tavelić, especially amongst soldiers, was sometimes unsustainable.¹³⁴ Its journal had a healthy subscription, even if subscribers were less keen to pay.¹³⁵ As early as 14 November 1941, the foundation stone of a new church to honour Tavelić in Kustošija was consecrated and the building was completed by 14 November 1943. The Church's opening, which was marked by an official ceremony attended by State officials, was a grand affair. The Church, designed by Ing. Dubšak, a well-known architect, was said to be based on an early renaissance style. Yet the style of the Church building was less important than what Nikola Tavelić represented. The reason State officials attended the ceremony and approved the cult of Tavelić was because Tavelić, as articles about him constantly stressed, worked for the "spiritual unity" of the nation, driving out heresy and any manifestation of division which was precisely what the Ustashas claimed to be doing. It demonstrated to the masses that they were following an ancient holy Croatian tradition whilst reminding the Croat people that, after everything, they remained committed, ultimately, to Catholicism.¹³⁶

In the legend of Tavelić, the apostle of Croatia and a fiery warrior armed only with a crucifix, the Ustashas must have seen themselves. Like them, he was a defender of the Croatian nation, interceding with the Madonna on behalf of the nation and fearlessly stepping onto the battlefield with heretics and unbelievers who tried to take the Catholic faith from the Croat nation. Like them, he was a martyr for the Catholic faith, giving his blood and life willingly for the greater good.¹³⁷ As an overwhelmingly Catholic movement, the Ustashas were as beguiled by the legend of Tavelić as other nationalist and Catholic Croats whose history

they must have learnt at school. The similarity of their experiences and his, they surely believed, would reinforce the idea amongst the faithful that they were good devout Catholic sons who should be obeyed and followed. However, the wish to see him canonised was mostly political. For the Ustashas, whose hatred of the Serbian Orthodox Church was partly based on resentment and jealousy at the fact that it was both a religion and a symbol of national unity, the canonisation of Tavelić would have given them a saint to rival Sava, whom they denigrated constantly. The Ustashas were also keen to win the recognition of the Vatican for their State since the Vatican had not fully recognised it and its representatives in Zagreb were ambivalent in their attitude towards it at best. In the event, Tavelić never became Saint Nikola. A combination of war conditions as well as the death of the Cardinal-Ponens who was responsible for canonisations, Pellengrini, saw to that.

CONCLUSION

Religion and religious imagery were integral to the Ustasha ideology. For utilitarian reasons, religion was crucial as it helped to differentiate the Ustashas and the Croat nation from the Serbs. The Catholic traditions of Croatia were a means by which the Croatian Serb population could be alienated and ostracised from other Croats. Those same traditions could also be used to suggest that Serbs and Croats represented not just two different states but also two separate mentalities which could not co-exist. The imagery of traditional Catholicism was also a means by which the Ustashas hoped they could cement the loyalty of the pious masses. By framing their struggle in Manichean terms of good and evil, they were providing ordinary Croats with a simple choice: either they could support the Ustasha Movement or risk annihilation at the hands of Croatia's enemies. Yet the Ustashas' began as a movement of nationalist students, many of

whom had been educated at seminaries and Catholic academies. Their chiliastic and apocalyptic language, permeated by Biblical allusions, was a reflection of their own education and value system.

Their relationship with the Croatian Catholic Church was similarly ambiguous. The Ustashas knew the support of the Catholic Church would be an invaluable propaganda weapon in their struggle to win the support or, at the very least, the acquiescence of the masses. The campaign to revive traditional Catholic morality was popular with the Church hierarchy as was the fact that they restored some of the previous influence of the Church in public life which it felt it had lost in Yugoslavia. However, the attempt to impose a fundamentalist Catholic morality also reflected the mystical, pious mindset of many members of the Movement, evidenced by the large number of Catholic Crusaders who joined the militias of the Ustasha Movement or who had supported the Ustasha Movement before 1941. Likewise, the support of large sections of the clergy of the Catholic Church for the Ustashas was dictated not just by a practical concern for increased influence in Croatian society, but testified to the fact that, since the middle of the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church and clerical organisations had been nationalistic, even chauvinist.

The two central religious symbols in the new State, the Virgin Mary and Nikola Tavelić, the latter whom Croatian nationalists and the Catholic hierarchy as well as the Ustashas tried to have canonised, demonstrated the apparently contradictory nature of the Ustashas' religious outlook. While the Virgin Mary represented mercy and gentleness, Tavelić, the thirteenth-century missionary, was supposed to represent the more activist and militant side of the Ustasha creed, converting apostates by force and destroying enemies of the true faith with fire and the sword. Both were created in the Ustashas' own image, with the result that Catholic imagery and symbolism in the State became so intertwined with mystical Ustasha rhetoric that the two became virtually indistinguishable. The new national faith of Catholicism and Ustashaism combined taught its followers that only through aggression, fanaticism and the willingness to sacrifice oneself

completely for the national cause could a new earthly kingdom of peace and morality be established.

NOTES

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- ¹ *Katolički tjednik*, 18 May 1941.
- ² *Sarajevski novi list*, 10 April 1942.
- ³ Many studies of the relationship between the Catholic church in Croatia and the Ustasha hierarchy in the Independent State of Croatia implicitly or explicitly blame the Catholic Church and the Vatican for the Ustasha genocide. See, for example, Dedijer (1987), Paris (1961), Rivelli (1999), Manhattan (1986). More considered analyses can be found in Jelinek (1980 b), 367-75, Alexander (1987) 31-62 and Steinberg (1995), 175-93.
- ⁴ *Il Resto del Carlino*, 18 September 1941 cited in West (1994), 100-1.
- ⁵ Schneider and Clough (1929), 73.
- ⁶ Mussolini (1935), 3-18.
- ⁷ Mussolini (1935), 3. Regarding cults of martyrdom in Italian Fascism and German National Socialism, see, for example, Brancaccio (1934), Ewers (1933). For a general discussion of the fascist warrior as an icon of suffering, see Mangan (1997), xi-xiii.
- ⁸ Gentile (1990), 233-4. See also Gentile (1993), 1-18, Falasca-Zamponi (1997), 1-14, Berezin (1997), 1-10.
- ⁹ Gentile (1990), 232-33.
- ¹⁰ Novak (1930), 710-712.
- ¹¹ *Riječ Srba-Hrvata-Slovenaca*, 19 April 1919.
- ¹² Bartulica (1919), 1.
- ¹³ Krleža (1928), 83-4, Vojnović (1919), 24.
- ¹⁴ Seton-Watson (1917), 3, 5, Marjanović (1919 b), 23.
- ¹⁵ Marjanović (1919 b), 22-25.
- ¹⁶ Marjanović (1919 a), 27.
- ¹⁷ See, for example, Meštrović (1926 a, b, c, d), Meštrović (1918).
- ¹⁸ See, for example, *Hrvat*, 29 April 1919.
- ¹⁹ Ivan (1919), 214-219.
- ²⁰ Haynes (2001), 1-17.
- ²¹ Lacquer (1977), 127-32.
- ²² *Ustaša*, 19 December 1941.
- ²³ Murvar (1942 b), 82-7.
- ²⁴ *Vrhbosna*, 56: 3-4, March-April 1942, 147-50.
- ²⁵ *Ustaša*, September 1932, *Ustaša*, November 1932.
- ²⁶ *Nova Hrvatska*, Easter 1944, Prpić (1943), 91-97.
- ²⁷ *Narodne novine*, 15 July 1941, *Katolički tjednik*, 15 June 1941, *Katolički tjednik*, 15 June 1941, *Narodne novine*, 5 July 1941, *Hrvatski narod*, 7 May 1941.
- ²⁸ *Katolički tjednik*, 20 July 1941.

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- ²⁹ *Narodne novine*, 5 July 1941.
- ³⁰ *Ustaša*, January-February 1934.
- ³¹ Belić and Junašević (1943), 1028-150.
- ³² Bzik (1942 c), 22.
- ³³ *Hrvatski krugoval*, 4 April 1943.
- ³⁴ *Ustaša*, 2 November 1941.
- ³⁵ *Ustaša*, 2 November 1941.
- ³⁶ See, for example, Pejnović (1942 b), 65, (G.P) Pejnović (1942 a), 47-50, *Ustaša*, 2 November 1941, *Ustaša*, 2 November 1941.
- ³⁷ *Spremnost*, 9 May 1943.
- ³⁸ See, for example *Hrvatski narod*, 10 May 1941, *Hrvatski narod*, 9 May 1941,
- ³⁹ See, for example, *Hrvatski domobran*, 5 December 1928, *Hrvatski domobran*, 13 December 1928.
- ⁴⁰ *Hrvatska riječ*, 6 December 1918.
- ⁴¹ *Ustaša*, 5 December 1941, *Ustaša*, 3 August 1941, *Ustaša*, 17 August 1941.
- ⁴² *Hrvatski narod*, 21 June 1941.
- ⁴³ *Ustaša*, 19 July 1941.
- ⁴⁴ *Hrvatski krugoval*, 4 April 1943, *Hrvatski branik*, 19 April 1941, *Ustaša*, 2 November 1941.
- ⁴⁵ See, for example, *Hrvatski narod*, 21 April 1942.
- ⁴⁶ Rubina (1943), 94-99.
- ⁴⁷ See, for example, Kršinić (1943 c).
- ⁴⁸ *Hrvatska krajina*, 9 July 1941.
- ⁴⁹ *Hrvatski branik*, 9 August 1941.
- ⁵⁰ *Ustaška mladež*, 26 April 1942.
- ⁵¹ *Sarajevski novi list*, 31 March 1943.
- ⁵² *Sarajevski novi list*, 2 April 1943.
- ⁵³ *Nova Hrvatska*, 18 April 1944.
- ⁵⁴ Kojaković (1943 b, f), 8-9, 14.
- ⁵⁵ *Nedjelja*, 13 December 1942.
- ⁵⁶ *Novi list*, 16 July 1941.
- ⁵⁷ *Ustaša*, 3 July 1941, HIS/NDH/1008-2316/1058/2/ 221.
- ⁵⁸ *Hrvatski narod*, 26 August 1941, *Hrvatski narod*, 4 June 1941.
- ⁵⁹ *Nedjelja*, 22 June 1941.
- ⁶⁰ See, for example, *Hrvatski narod*, 25 July 1942, *Hrvatski narod*, 4 June 1944.
- ⁶¹ *Hrvatski narod*, 30 May 1942.
- ⁶² *Katolički list*, 4 May 1942.
- ⁶³ *Vrhbosna*, LVI: 3-4, March-April 1942.

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- ⁶⁴ *Nedjelja*, 6 July 1941.
- ⁶⁵ See, for example, Guberina (1942), 77-81.
- ⁶⁶ Mužić (1975), 202-4.
- ⁶⁷ Jedan svećenik (1919 a), 461-2, Jedan svećenik (1919 b), 348-9.
- ⁶⁸ Alexander (1987 a), 31-62.
- ⁶⁹ Žutić (1991), 92.
- ⁷⁰ Guberina (1943 a), 23-31.
- ⁷¹ Conway (1996), 2-22.
- ⁷² Conway (1996), 2-22.
- ⁷³ *Katolički list*, 29 April 1941.
- ⁷⁴ *Hrvatski narod*, 21 April 1942.
- ⁷⁵ *Katolički list*, 29 April 1941.
- ⁷⁶ *Katolički list*, 16 October 1941, *Katolički list*, 14 August 1941.
- ⁷⁷ Rhodes (1973), 328-29.
- ⁷⁸ *Katolički list*, 14 August 1941.
- ⁷⁹ *Nedjelja*, 4 May 1941, *Nedjelja*, 9 October 1941, *Katolički tjednik*, 25 May 1941, *Nedjelja*, 18 January 1941, *Nedjelja*, 4 May 1941.
- ⁸⁰ *Katolički list*, 14 August 1941, *Katolički tjednik*, 25 May 1941.
- ⁸¹ *Katolički tjednik*, 18 January 1942.
- ⁸² *Hrvatski narod*, 28 March 1944, Hren (1944), 55-61.
- ⁸³ Hren (1944), 33-37.
- ⁸⁴ *Hrvatska smotra*, 11: 7-10, July-October 1943, 435-46.
- ⁸⁵ *Katolički tjednik*, 20 July 1941.
- ⁸⁶ C.f. *Nedjelja*, 18 October 1942, *Katolički tjednik*, 12 April 1942.
- ⁸⁷ The best English language account of Stepinac's relationship with the Ustasha hierarchy is contained in Alexander (1987 b), 59-115.
- ⁸⁸ *Nova Hrvatska*, 7 November 1944.
- ⁸⁹ *Križar*, 1: 1, January-February 1942, 17-18, *Nedjelja*, 29 October 1942.
- ⁹⁰ *Nedjelja*, 29 May 1941, *Nedjelja*, 5 April 1942.
- ⁹¹ *Katolički tjednik*, 30 July 1944.
- ⁹² *Nedjelja*, 4 June 1941, *Nedjelja*, 13 December 1942.
- ⁹³ *Križar*, 1: 1, January-February 1942, 17-18, *Križar*, 1: 4, July-August 1942, 99-100, *Nedjelja*, 4 June 1941, *Nedjelja*, 4 June 1941, *Nedjelja*, 4 June 1941.
- ⁹⁴ *Nedjelja*, 29 October 1942.
- ⁹⁵ See, for example, *Nedjelja*, 7 December 1942, *Nedjelja*, 29 October 1942.
- ⁹⁶ *Nedjelja*, 11 January 1942, *Nedjelja*, 29 October 1942.
- ⁹⁷ *Katolički tjednik*, 6 June 1943, *Nedjelja*, 22 February 1942.

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- ⁹⁸ *Nedjelja*, 13 December 1942.
- ⁹⁹ *Nedjelja*, 15 June 1941, *Nedjelja*, 6 March 1944.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Nedjelja*, 29 April 1944.
- ¹⁰¹ *Nova Hrvatska*, 30 July 1944.
- ¹⁰² *Hrvatski narod*, 5 May 1944.
- ¹⁰³ *Nedjelja*, 6 March 1944.
- ¹⁰⁴ GRP/NDH/9/237/1943-5/193. The films were *Anuska* and *Višina na jezeru*.
- ¹⁰⁵ Kljaković (1943 a, c, e).
- ¹⁰⁶ Meštrović (1942 a, b).
- ¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Erčegović (1942), 299-300, Lendić (1942), 292-3, Baljić (1942), Radan (1943).
- ¹⁰⁸ Klarić (1944 a).
- ¹⁰⁹ Klarić (1944 a), Baljić (1942).
- ¹¹⁰ See, for example, Klarić (1944 b), 326-8.
- ¹¹¹ See, for example, Škarpa (1942), 297-98, Trontl (1941 a), 233-34.
- ¹¹² Warner (1976), *passim*.
- ¹¹³ The Ustasha marching song "In Kozara" ("U Kozaru") by Gabrijel Cvitan is a direct copy of Da Todi's "Donna del paradiso."
- ¹¹⁴ Korner (1941 a, b), 150-1, *Nedjelja*, 19 April 1942, *Glasnik srce Isusovaca*, 51: 12, December 1942, 231-32.
- ¹¹⁵ *Katolički tjednik*, 11 May 1941.
- ¹¹⁶ *Katolički list*, 17 July 1941, *Nova Hrvatska*, 14 July 1942, *Nova Hrvatska*, 14 July 1942.
- ¹¹⁷ *Katolički list*, 30 April 1942. The acronym Nadasve also means "above all" in Serbo-Croat.
- ¹¹⁸ *Katolički list*, 15 October 1942.
- ¹¹⁹ *Hrvatski narod*, 28 May 1944.
- ¹²⁰ *Katolički list*, 17 July 1941.
- ¹²¹ *Katolički list*, 16 July 1942.
- ¹²² *Katolički list*, 18 May 1942.
- ¹²³ *Katolički list*, 15 July 1944.
- ¹²⁴ *Katolički list*, 15 July 1944.
- ¹²⁵ *Novi list*, 4 August 1941.
- ¹²⁶ Andrić (1942), 1-5.
- ¹²⁷ Andrić (1942), 9-15.
- ¹²⁸ Andrić (1942), 16-24.
- ¹²⁹ Andrić (1942), 1.
- ¹³⁰ *Glasnik Bl. Nikole Tavelića*, 2: 5-6, May-June 1944, 87.
- ¹³¹ *Katolički list*, 5 November 1942, *Glasnik Bl. Nikole Tavelića*, 1: 1-2, November-December 1943, 20.

¹³² See, for example, Lendić (1944), 12, Kordić (1944), 86,

¹³³ *Glasnik Bl. Nikole Tavelića*, 1: 1-2, November-December 1943, 20.

¹³⁴ For example, Father Anto Perković of Brčko ordered 4000 images of Tavelić to be sent “as soon as humanely possible” and he registered the entire župa in the League. *Glasnik Bl. Nikole Tavelića*, 2: 5-6, May-June 1944, 88.

¹³⁵ *Glasnik Bl. Nikole Tavelića*, 2: 5-6, May-June 1944, 93. On the basis that the cost of printing the journal was 220,000 Kunas, and with subscription rates ranging from 120-200 Kunas annually, there must have been at least 10,000 readers.

¹³⁶ *Glasnik Bl. Nikole Tavelića*, 1: 1-2, November-December 1943, 25-28, *Glasnik Bl. Nikole Tavelića*, 2: 1-2, January-February 1944, 23-26.

¹³⁷ *Glasnik Bl. Nikole Tavelića*, 2: 3-4, March-April 1944, 47-48, *Katolički list*, 5 November 1942, *Katolički list*, 1 October 1941.

Ustasha Visions: Art, Literature and Mass Culture in the Independent State of Croatia

Contrary to the opinion of some writers and historians, the era of fascism and Nazism was not artistically arid: although fascism indeed produced much culture and art of minimal artistic worth, fascist and Nazi society also produced a receptive atmosphere in which artists such as the filmmaker, Roberto Rossellini, the writer, Robert Brasillach and the actor, Heinrich George could produce some of their best work.¹ No matter what one might think of the political ideologies they served, the creative powers of many fascist and Nazi-era artists are not in doubt. That fascist rule provoked great art should not come as a surprise if we bear in mind that fascism began as a cultural rebellion. In spite of their militant reputation, the concept of culture was also at the heart of the Ustasha ideology. By 1941, many leading cultural institutions were controlled by nationalists sympathetic to or openly supportive of the aims of the Ustasha Movement. The premier cultural institution in Croatia, *Matica Hrvatska*, had become sufficiently nationalist by 1940 for the Ban of Croatia, Ivan Subašić, to place it under the control of a Commissariat. One of the first acts of the Ustashas after they came to power was to hand back power to the board of directors, most of whom, in any case, were Ustasha sympathisers.² When the Ustashas came to power in 1941, State ideologues proclaimed that the national revolution which had brought Ustasha rule would have to be followed by a second, cultural revolution to remake the nation in the Ustashas' image and to reverse the damage of twenty years of Yugoslavism, liberalism and democratic thought. One of the founding principles of the Movement was that their struggle for the liberation of Croatia represented the struggle of members of a European western culture against a "half-Asiatic, backwards, brutal conqueror." As their party journal argued in 1940, the Ustasha

was not just a warrior for Croatian liberation, but “a warrior for culture, a vanguard of Europe and the cultured world in general.”³

The Ustashas placed a lot of importance on culture because they believed that culture could serve a utilitarian function in popularising their message among the Croatian people. However, they also believed that art had a social function to play and they wished to make it accessible to the masses. In Yugoslavia, they argued, culture had often been the preserve of a rarefied *élite*, not available to ordinary people either as spectators, let alone as participants. Dušan Žanko, for example, the director of the Zagreb State Theatre, envisaged the end of “small chamber theatre for the *élite*,” as in Yugoslavia; instead theatre for the masses would embrace “in its wings 20 000 people united in delirium and faith.”⁴ Yet this desire to create a popular culture also revealed the inner ideological tensions of the Ustasha Movement. Almost from its inception, the Ustashas had been divided into factions: home Ustashas and *émigré* (“Ras”) Ustashas, extreme and moderate Ustashas. While it is difficult to generalise, it is fair to say that home Ustashas were better educated, more politically pragmatic and more willing to compromise with those outside the Movement. For their part, the Ras often regarded themselves as the only real Ustasha men, the *avant garde* of the Croat war of liberation and home Ustashas as soft and overly-intellectual. These two factions were in a state of civil war between 1941 and 1945, although alliances often shifted from one faction to another. The fundamental difference between the two groups was in the way they saw their own Movement. For radical Ras ideologues such as Ivo Guberina, the Ustashas were an *élite* group of warriors whose “Ustasha *élan*” would be destroyed should they become a mass movement. In such a case, “Ustaštvo would cease to be ours. It would cease to be *élite*.”⁵ Ivo Bogdan thought the same. He advocated that only the “most respectable, best, healthiest and most Croatian” men could be gathered in the Ustasha Movement. Emphasising quality over quantity, he explained that the Movement needed men prepared to sacrifice everything for the Ustasha cause and never satisfy their own demands. Rulers which relied on a small *élite* of soldiers would be guaranteed to be national rather than despotic. In the case of the Poglavnik, he was assured of

the loyalty of a small number of ideologically educated and disciplined Ustashas.⁶ Others, however, such as Julije Makanec, argued that the Movement should be a national movement of and for the masses. As proof he cited the “general national uprising” of 10 April 1941 which had brought the Ustashas to power and which he believed showed that the nation was already imbued with Ustasha ideals. For Tias Mortigjija, the Ustasha Movement was simply “the political organisation of the Croatian nation, a declaration of its politics and the expression of its will.” Both Makanec and Mortigjija believed that every Croat should be an Ustasha, consciously imbued with the spirit of Ustasha Principles, living and working by these Principles.⁷ While those who believed that the Ustashas should be a mass movement appear to have won the culture wars, the art produced for and by the Movement often stressed its revolutionary origin and ideology and the Ustashas never managed to completely conceal their élitist frame of mind.

In Communist Yugoslavia, it was common for historians to dismiss the work of artists who had collaborated with the Ustashas as of little lasting value and the artists themselves as untalented and deservedly unrecognised. Sometimes, they even suggested that almost no writers, actors, poets or painters had collaborated with the Ustashas. By contrast, they asserted, talented artists had supported the Partisans. Such historians tended to be unforgiving towards artists who had co-operated with the Ustashas and yet conveniently forgot the fact that many illustrious artists who later joined the Partisans, or at the least, sympathised with them, had begun by, if not exactly supporting, at least acquiescing to the Ustasha regime.⁸ In cases where genuinely gifted artists were close to the Ustashas, for example writing regularly in their journals or penning odes to the Poglavnik, their collaboration was explained as a reflection of their artistic and aesthetic affinity with the Movement; politically, they were described as being neutral.⁹

As Stanko Lašić has pointed out, the artistic community’s reaction to the arrival of the Ustashas ran the gamut from radical affirmation of their ideology to radical negation; most artists were somewhere in the middle.¹⁰ Since many Croats who were not Ustasha supporters had also welcomed the creation of an independent Croatia, it was natural that many artists should do too. Unlike Nazi Germany,

where art was subject to strict ideological interference based not just on content but also form, in Croatia as in fascist Italy, art and literature were not subject to any prevailing artistic fashions.¹¹ Art in the Independent State of Croatia could be, and was, modernist, traditionalist, surrealist, neo-realist, erotic or religious; insofar as it sang the praises of, or at least did not openly challenge, the power of the regime, it was acceptable. The attitude of the Ustashas to artists was also important. Their journals, cultural institutions and propaganda departments organised annual lucrative competitions to find the best poems, essays, novels, plays and paintings and this provided a vital source of income for artists between 1941 and 1945 when economic conditions were so parlous. The most prestigious and largest of these was the Saint Ante Prizes, established by the State Institute for National Education (Državni zavod za narodnu prosvjetu) and awarded on 13 June each year.¹² A recent study of the system of these state literary awards has shown that the Ustashas favoured artistic merit over agitprop. Prizes were given to poems, plays, operas, music and visual arts and novels which the Ustashas thought would bring their regime prestige; the most blatantly pro-Ustasha literary works and propagandistic writers went unrewarded while writers known for their ambivalence and even opposition to the regime were recipients of awards. For example, in 1944 Gustav Krklec was awarded the Saint Ante prize for his contribution to Croatian poetry; by contrast, Zlatko Milković, one of the most political of a new generation of young nationalist writers, never won an award.¹³ The Ustashas also aimed to win the support of artists through the introduction of strict copyright laws in November 1941 which sought to protect the commercial rights of the author in cases of copyright.¹⁴ On the other hand, the Ustashas did not respect the principle of intellectual property and appropriated the work of dead artists as well as that of the living as their own. Inevitably, artists had little control over how their work was used.¹⁵

For nationalist artists, the ascent of the Ustashas was welcomed as a cultural liberation. For Zlatko Milković, it meant that Croatian writers were now free to express themselves after twenty years of oppression in the “shackles” of an enemy culture.¹⁶ Sixty years after its collapse, some nationalist writers insist that the

Independent State of Croatia was culturally freer than both the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Communist Yugoslavia. Certainly, cultural and artistic life in Croatia between 1941 and 1945 was nothing like as arid or barren as has often been suggested; nor were artists as subject to the terror of the regime as supposed. While some, undoubtedly, were subject to various forms of pressure, others enthusiastically engaged with the new regime. However, ultimately, the Ustashas ruled by totalitarian methods and some writers were imprisoned, incarcerated in concentration camps and even killed for refusing to write for the Ustasha authorities. Indeed, in a courageous article, Antun Barac, argued that it was the moral right of the artist to remain silent and maintain his integrity in times of crisis and conflict, if he wished. "There are times when to the serious person, writing seems a very insignificant and almost unworthy occupation," he wrote.¹⁷ At the other extreme, the Ustashas also had a well-developed system of censorship to prevent the production of books they did not approve of. In April 1941, the Ustashas created a State Bureau for Propaganda led by Mijo Tolj and various Ustasha and nationalist intellectuals, including the poet Branko Klarić and the Ustasha youth leader, Grga Pejnović. Its job was to decide which books could be published. At the same time, a special propaganda division in the State Prosecutor's Office was empowered to impose the death penalty for all books or leaflets which advocated "violence against the State authorities or generally threaten public order and peace" or incited change achieved through "crime, violence" or any kind of "terrorism."¹⁸ Books written in the Cyrillic script or Serbian and the works of a swathe of eminent novelists including Miroslav Krleža, John Dos Passos, Maxim Gorky and August Cesarec as well as "all other Marxist and pro-Yugoslav Anglophile" writing was deemed dangerous enough to public order to be banned.¹⁹

The State Bureau for Propaganda, which was renamed the Chief Commissariat for Propaganda in 1943, enjoyed substantial power. It could and did order newspapers and journals to print a certain article or to report an incident or an institution in a certain way. A typical order from the Movement's propaganda chief and official historian, Mijo Bzik, on the occasion of the appointment of

Ustasha officials and commanders of the Poglavnik Bodyguard, instructed editors of newspapers to “emphasise the heroism, selflessness, belief, modesty and life of the Ustashes in exile, who through many years in the greatest hardship lived in the Ustasha camps, always true and faithful to the Poglavnik and the sublime idea of the freedom and independence of the Independent State of Croatia.” By contrast, they were to “only lightly touch on the fact that, along with the many good Ustashes, there were also some self-styled Ustashes who committed deeds which are in complete opposition to the Ustasha Principles and which real Ustashes never would.”²⁰ Although the Commissariat of Propaganda did ban many books, its reasoning was arbitrary to say the least: a lack of paper was often as much of a motivating factor as ideological concerns. Nazi novels advocating euthanasia or abortion were as likely to be banned as the novels of Marxist writers and pro-Ustasha writers saw their books subject to censure.²¹ Nor was the Commissariat for Propaganda all pervasive. Increasingly, Croatian journalists became far bolder in attacking the decisions of the Commissariat. Editors and journalists not only attacked the heavy-handed behaviour of the Bureau but also pressed for the right to report accurately and objectively about events in the homeland; they were fed up with “castrated propaganda” about non-existent Ustasha victories. As one journalist supportive of the regime said: “The people are evermore fearful, they are falling prey to the suggestions of enemy propaganda and are losing faith in everything. Everyone believes the authority of the State has collapsed...the Orthodox now openly support opposition groups.”²²

Even official Ustasha journals provoked the ire of the propaganda department. *Spremnost* (Readiness), founded in early 1942, was an official weekly newspaper for Ustasha culture and politics. Unlike newspapers such as the Movement’s official journal *Ustaša* (The Insurgent), which remained radical until the end, *Spremnost* veered between extreme and moderate periods. Much depended on the editor. In the beginning, under its then editor, Ivo Bogdan, it was radical and revolutionary, taking a pure absolutist Ustasha line. After his replacement by Tias Mortidgija in late 1942, it adopted a more moderate and more conciliatory attitude, especially towards the Serbian question. Under its second editor it

became increasingly independent in thought and content, going as far as to print articles or caricatures without asking permission, something which infuriated hardline functionaries at the Commissariat of Propaganda. In this period it became associated with a moderate faction of the regime identified with Mladen Lorković and Ante Vokić, as well as the irreverent clique of Ustasha students from the *Plug* journal. With the arrest of leaders of this faction in 1944, including Mortidgija, a hardline former student commissar, Franjo Nevistić, replaced him as editor and immediately took the journal back to its radical roots. In this way, the progress of *Spremnost* mirrored the changes in the State itself which moved from a phase of radical action in 1941 through a period of moderation and consolidation in 1942 and 1943 before returning to revolutionary first principles in 1944 and 1945.²³

To suggest that all forms of censorship emanated from the Ustashas' own often-chaotic propaganda departments would be to ignore the fact that pressure for censorship came not just from above but also from below. In the summer and autumn of 1941, when State propaganda departments had not been established in anything other than rudimentary form, censorship seems to have more often been carried out spontaneously by ideologically-sympathetic citizens. In late 1941, the editor of *Hrvatska straža* (The Croatian Guard), accompanied by the police and a group of students armed with a register, carried out the confiscation of all copies of André Gide novels in Osijek's bookshops and libraries; likewise, the Ustasha youth leaders, Duro Balaković and Emil Medković, led the campaign of burning and confiscating illicit books. Balaković argued that the burning of books should be seen as an act of purification: "Thank God that finally we can once and for all radically deal with the filth which has corrupted our youth," he said. He reminded booksellers that should they violate this, then according to article 92 of the law they could face the death penalty. According to at least one newspaper, book burning were happening all across Croatia.²⁴

The Ustashas, like Yugoslav ideologues before them, believed that they were creating a new kind of society. This new society obviously needed a new kind of person and so new ways of thinking, doing, speaking and writing had to be

institutionalised to remake ordinary Croats. The Ustasas wanted not only to engage the masses in culture, in contrast to the élitist past, but they also encouraged the members of their own Movement – ordinary workers, peasants, legionaries and soldiers - to express themselves in writing, singing, acting and poetry. From this revolutionary culture, the Ustasas envisaged that a new revolutionary art would emerge which would imbue in the masses sympathy and support for the aims of the Ustasha Movement. For its ability to communicate with the masses, the Ustasas lauded the two most modern forms of mass culture, cinema and radio. Finally, the Ustasas endeavoured to appropriate literary and political figures from Croatia's past (whose writing often contradicted their ideology) in order to demonstrate to the nation that the Movement was the voice of all Croats, the living and the dead.

Becoming Cultured but Staying Revolutionary: Anti-Bourgeois Rhetoric and the Acquisition of "Taste"

As already mentioned, the Ustasas saw themselves as a movement of workers and peasants who had liberated their homeland from the clutches of a bourgeois ideology. According to Mijo Bzik, the founder members of the Ustasha émigré organisation had been Croatian workers in Europe, with "calloused hands and faces blackened by work."²⁵ For him, the Ustasas were peasants and workers. The Ustasas idealised the working-classes and despised the bourgeoisie, a term applied indiscriminately to the affluent, Jews and those who advocated a society based on liberal, democratic and capitalist values. Bzik believed that the working-classes embodied everything that was best about the Ustasha Movement – comradeship, modesty and honesty. By contrast, the bourgeoisie were over-educated, untrustworthy, opportunistic and likely to betray Croatia if better times arrived.²⁶ In the Ustasas' Croatia, everyone, whether he was a worker, peasant, intellectual or soldier was to be defined as a worker.

For Ustashas like Bzik, 1941 was the date not just of a national but also a social revolution. The bourgeois and capitalist foreigners – above all, Serbs and Jews – had been expelled from Croatia's land of plenty and, instead, the ordinary honest Croatian working man would be entrusted with power.²⁷ Workers were entering a golden era: with the elimination of the bourgeois factory owners and the eradication of the Jew from the national economy, the Croatian worker was advancing "with huge strides."²⁸ In the new Croatia, working-class youths in the cities and the towns were joining the Movement in droves and defending their villages and towns from the Communist bandits with the bravery of all true Ustashas.²⁹ However, the Ustashas anti-bourgeois rhetoric amounted to more than a collection of revolutionary slogans. From its inception, the quest for social justice had been an important feature of the ideology of the Ustasha Movement. In the nationalist Croatia of the late 1930s and especially in the Croatian Banovina, the fascist economic concept of the corporate state had been gaining in popularity amongst not only intellectuals on the right, but also workers' organisations such as the Croatian Workers' Union and political parties such as the Peasant Party. A number of influential, formerly Marxist intellectuals like Milivoj Magdić had embraced the corporate idea of class peace, social justice and social order. By 1940, Communist trade unions had been banned and its leaders arrested. Meanwhile, Dr Ernest Marks, a leading member of the Worker's Chamber, had founded the Croatian Social Institute, a research institution which had strong links with Dr Robert Ley's Institute of the German Front of Labour.³⁰ Nationalist workers' journals by the late 1930s, capturing the mood of the times, were calling for an end to class conflict and instructing working-class youth to maintain their "workers' pride" from the assault of Communism. In 1941, the journal of the Croatian Workers' Union stated with pride that "the overwhelming majority of Croat workers" opposed Marxism and belonged to their nationalist organisation.³¹

The Ustashas aimed to build a just social state based upon their understanding of a special Croatian kind of socialism. They argued that Communist ideologues since Marx had been overwhelmingly members of the bourgeois and civic classes

with little understanding of the peasant and worker and they mocked those bourgeois socialists who wore workers' caps or adorned themselves in peasant clothes even though they had never so much as lifted a hammer or "set foot inside a peasant house." This, the Ustashas reasoned, was why their socialism was so "brutal."³² By contrast, they argued that they were authentically working-class and thus would be able to introduce a humane form of socialism. Under one of its chief ideologues, Aleksandar Seitz, the Movement developed its model of a national and socialist economy and society. Croatian socialism had at its core the fascist idea of a corporate state and like Italy, all trade and workers unions were subsumed into one main syndicate, the Main Alliance of Trade Union Syndicates, led by Seitz. Likewise, all large industry was taken into the hands of the State. However, Croatian socialism was not simply a carbon copy of corporatism: it attempted to address specifically national issues, in particular the chronic social situation. A programme of mass education for the poor was initiated and the Ustashas also introduced a series of social security benefits for working-class families, including sick pay, a minimum wage, child benefits, unemployment pay and protections for part-time workers. In addition, they also opened a number of workers' kitchens for impoverished and hungry workers and began construction of workers' colonies which would provide modern affordable housing for the masses. These settlements, overseen by the Bureau for the Construction of Croatian Workers' Homes, were built all over the State soon after the Ustashas came to power and often were large-scale. The Mijo Babić Workers' Estate, for example, comprised nearly 1000 houses.³³

The Ustashas' claim to be a movement of workers and peasants was grounded in demographic fact. The Movement had relatively few educated middle-class members outside the leadership and most Ustashas were peasants, workers and sailors. One of the first actions of the émigré Ustasha Movement, to declare a war against illiteracy, reflected the working-class and peasant bias of its membership. In May 1941, the war against illiteracy was brought to the entire nation with the introduction of a law to promote literacy amongst the masses. It was envisaged that within a period of six years everyone under the age of fifty would be able to

read and write. The law instructed local authorities to establish special colleges and schools for this purpose. The rules for students were strict and there were stern sanctions for disobedience in class and non-attendance. However, in a state with a relatively low level of literacy and a shortage of qualified teachers, even before the law was introduced, educationalists were debating how best to proceed with the campaign, some suggesting that women could be literacy instructors.³⁴ The Ustashas also founded public libraries for workers and Ustashas. In October 1941, a radio programme especially for workers began and in its first emission on 15 October, workers in factories, shops and offices across Croatia stopped working to listen to the announcer proclaim that the victory of the workers in Croatia was a victory over the “Jewish-capitalist owners” of the old regime. The aim of the new radio programme was to make the worker feel at home, no longer exploited by Jews and foreigners when “his blood was drained and his strength sapped, when workers were slaves and a lumpen layer, when they were placed in the greatest misery and lived the barest of existences.”³⁵ The Ustashas also envisaged the construction of gyms and exercise halls in factories and businesses which would be paid for with public taxes if businesses could not afford them. They believed that physical fitness was the key to workers’ progress. In the Ustasha State, the worker would be able to “strengthen his muscles” and thus improve his working conditions.³⁶

As well as social progress, cultural enlightenment was prescribed for the working classes. In the new Croatia, art and literature were to be brought to the masses. Mass culture is often associated with urban society and it is sometimes suggested that the Ustasha Movement was anti-urbanist.³⁷ This is not true. While the Ustashas certainly saw the village as the heart of traditional Croatian life, they also recognised the limited values and aspirations of the village. They believed in a synthesis of town and countryside in order to prevent the villages from becoming narrow-minded and towns from becoming morally decadent. They argued, for instance, that it was particularly important for youths from the village who had come to Zagreb to study to imbue the city’s cultural riches; in this way they would be “in the provinces pioneers not only of technical but also cultural

progress...lifting them above the banality of parochial society.”³⁸ Nor, as will be shown, were they hostile to technology. Their hostility was not towards the city as a concept but rather those aspects which they considered élitist, alienating or foreign. The peasants would be elevated, enriched and educated, not through the efforts of distant cosmopolitans importing “distorted culture and morals,” but through peasants and the Ustashas working in harmony to halt the decay of the village and eradicate backwardness. Unlike in Yugoslavia, the poor of Croatia would not have to “travel from house to house like wretches, looking for alms and feeling that they are superfluous in their own homeland.”³⁹

Radio and cinema were obvious mediums for the transmission of this new cultural enlightenment. Radovan Latković, the director of programmes at Croatian Radio, vowed to elevate radio above the rarefied status it had enjoyed in Yugoslavia where it had been a plaything of “Jews and plutocrats” and make it the property of the whole Croatian nation, united in a “spirit of Croatian principles and Ustastvo.”⁴⁰ To bring the radio to more Croats new stations were built in Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Dubrovnik. By the time of the first anniversary of the State, thousands of citizens could hear the official celebrations from St Mark’s Cathedral in Zagreb even as they could not be there.⁴¹ Owing to its populist aims, radio in Croatia encouraged the participation of the masses and acknowledged that the opinions of listeners mattered. Listeners were not only persuaded to provide feedback in the form of letters of praise or encouragement, but there were also special radio programmes devoted to the musical choices of interested listeners. State radio in Croatia even went as far as to conduct surveys into the likes and dislikes of listeners so they could provide a better service in the future. It was an early example of cultural democracy in Croatia and the often unreasonable letters of listeners and the irreverent replies of the station editors became a staple feature of the radio magazine.⁴² The Ustashas had similar aspirations for cinema. Looking back on three years of Croatian cinema in 1944, its director, Marijan Mikac, argued that his greatest achievement was moving cinema in Croatia away from the purely commercial basis under which it had operated in Yugoslavia and transforming it into a national institution.⁴³ Croatian

cinema, in order to bring films to remote towns and villages, founded a mobile unit which visited communities without cinemas to bring them the latest films and propaganda cinereels. Inevitably, this served a useful propaganda purpose: for example, a film about Ante Starčević, entitled *Otac domovine* (Father of the Homeland, 1942), was to be taken to villages and towns so its inhabitants could get to know his ideas better. It was also an opportunity “to carry the work of the second Ante (Pavelić) to thousands of villages and towns.”⁴⁴ On the other hand, the Ustashas were not wrong to point out that they were among the first rulers in Croatia to bring technological advances to the villages, and it was the duty of the State Film Institute to bring to the most far-flung villages newsreels of world and national events. “Although it is already the twentieth century,” its journal pointed out, “a century of technical progress, embedded in life, our villages lived the life of our ancestors. It was not until the founding of the Independent State of Croatia that they would feel the blessings of contemporaneity.”⁴⁵ Despite this, the efforts of state cinema were not always successful: it seems the people watched what they wanted to watch and outside Zagreb, in cities such as Sarajevo, that meant feature films – comedies, romances and dramas – and not the ideological documentaries and newsreels which predominated in Croatian cinema under the Ustashas, irrespective of the fact that they depicted “national heroes and warriors who courageously defend national independence and freedom on the battlefield with a gun in their hand.”⁴⁶

Aside from these modern forms of mass culture, the cultural commissars of the Ustasha Movement believed that theatre could also be brought closer to the people. Although some, such as the theatre impresario Bruno Gavella, doubted it existed, the Ustashas aimed to create a new form of theatre which would be accessible both financially and intellectually to the ordinary man on the street – people’s drama. Ahmed Muradbegović argued that real people’s drama was encapsulated in Henrik Ibsen’s *Peer Gynt* which embodied Norway’s “most essential racial characteristics.” In the Croatian context, he cited plays such as Ogriznović’s *Hasangačić*, Josip Kozor’s *Požar strasti* (The Fire of Passion) or Ivan Gundulić’s *Dubravka* which had seeped into the “essence of our national

soul.”⁴⁷ Dušan Žanko’s idea of a “new art: an art for the many” was to be realised in a number of ways. People’s theatre companies which were led by young actors and produced accessible works for the general public were created to augment existing state companies; admission prices for theatres were slashed so that workers and students could see the latest productions and many regional theatres held special performances on Sundays for peasants and workers at the newly-founded people’s universities as well as for injured soldiers and Ustashas. The aim, as Muradbegović told an interviewer, was to create a situation in which everyone had an opportunity to visit the theatre and see it not as a luxury but an essential part of their spiritual and cultural life.⁴⁸ Volunteer theatre companies also toured the State, promoting people’s drama and popular art.⁴⁹ Although artists such as Gavella rejected the idea of people’s drama, he believed that, with the arrival of the Ustashas, a new kind of drama would emerge. It would be based on the concept of the “new tragedy” at whose centre would be a fallible hero who would fight not against others but himself. This new drama would liberate the actor who would find a “true sincere pathos,” no longer being “a slave of stylistic experiments or pathetic imitations of naturalism but [who] will be free to create what only he can create: a new home, a new theatre.”⁵⁰

It was not enough that workers and peasants simply enjoy the new cultural possibilities on offer; they were also given the opportunity to express themselves. The possibilities for workers and peasants seemed to be endless: they were invited to audition for people’s theatre companies and to be singers and actors on state radio; the Education Ministry established competitions for amateur playwrights to write new people’s dramas and the State Institute for Film invited the general public to submit film scripts; the theatre company of the Croatian Workers’ Union, found its productions covered in the regime’s major cultural and political journal. Countless plays, books and poems addressed the struggle of workers in Yugoslavia.⁵¹ Aside from this, in a State in which the worker was paramount and the term intellectual interpreted as a form of abuse, for perhaps the first time, workers and peasants had official permission to express themselves. People’s literature was born.

In Ustasha journals, workers and peasants had an unparalleled opportunity to make their literary mark and the Movement's official journal called for all Ustashes with writing talent to make themselves known. The only stipulation was that articles should be "short, clear, accessible and comprehensible to the small man... No know-it-alls, no somnambulism, no puns!"⁵² Such advice seems to have been followed. Peasants and workers in the Movement did not write many articles (which tended to remain the preserve of the intellectual workers), but they did write poems and short stories, usually simple in style, patriotic in nature and aggressive in tone. "Ustashes!" one poem began. "We will never/ give our beautiful Homeland to the cut-throats."⁵³ Another vowed: "The blood of the enemy/ let it from now on flow/ the Croat will not be a slave for anyone."⁵⁴ While it is true that much of the people's poetry did not reach a high artistic level and that some of it was so bad that there were even unkind satires about it,⁵⁵ this was not the point. Giving workers and peasants the opportunity to write about their feelings concerning the new Croatia was good propaganda, the Ustashes believed. The panegyric nature of most of these poems not only placed the Movement in a positive light but reinforced a central tenet of the Ustashes' propaganda: that the whole nation supported their concept of Croatianism.

Perhaps the best-known of the people's writers was an itinerant labourer called Ivan Softa. Unlike some people's artists such as the poet Matija Pavlović, the playwright Franjo Babić and the novelist Ivan Triplat, Softa published no novels between 1941 and 1945. His novels had been published in the growing nationalist atmosphere of Croatia in the late 1930s; during the years of Ustasha rule, he turned his hand to writing polemical articles as well as the occasional short story which he combined with a position as chief librarian at the Ustasha Movement's central library in Zagreb. Softa was a social novelist and his three novels were written at a time in Croatian literature when there was an upsurge in interest in addressing societal problems. Set in the countryside, they explored upheaval and the national struggle in rural Croatia after 1918. His novels, which attacked the rich landowners and factory owners, were distinguished by their explicitly anti-Serb and anti-Yugoslav agenda and by the fact that the writer's work was largely

ignored in the Croatian literary scene of the 1930s. Nationalist critics argued that he remained “neglected, forgotten and unacknowledged,” his talent unacclaimed in Yugoslavia due to his genuine worker’s life of poverty and unemployment. Most writers, it was argued, only wrote about the working-class because it was fashionable. He, by contrast, was writing about his own life. He was also allegedly persecuted because of his “national Ustasha conscience and struggle for a new better world, for the establishment of social justice, for a new Croatia.”⁵⁶

Softa’s childhood experience of “starvation and suffering” was said to have left its mark on the novelist. In his most famous novel, *Dani jada i glada* (Days of Misery and Hunger, 1937), the desire for revenge after decades of humiliation, although it was written prior to the Ustashas’ rise to power, surely resonated with them. In this saga of Bosnian villagers at the end of World War One, the fall of the Austrian Army is followed by an even greater oppression, with the arrival of the occupying Serbian army. As the young protagonist of the novel, Miše, remarks: “We lived better before the War. Then we still had some faith in progress and freedom. And we had cast off the slavery of the Turks. We didn’t know that we were swapping one type of slavery for another. It would have been better if we hadn’t known” (101-2). The villain of the novel is Matiša Dudalis, the local exploitative landowner, who was once a firm supporter of the Habsburgs and is now not only a loyal Yugoslav but also a parliamentary candidate. His daughter, Lela, is a “typical Croatian progressive” in that she hates the village and is a proponent of free love. In his speeches, Miše seems to encapsulates all that is wrong with the capitalist system and with Yugoslavia. His keen sense of powerlessness of the ordinary worker looks forward to the Ustasha revolution of 1941:

I used to go to work hungry and tired but I sang. I was a strong person who fought for his daily bread. And today?...this perception has been killed: I am not a free person, there are people who can use me whenever they want, their way, like the boss. There are people who forced me to be a criminal, to kill people and destroy what people had built with their own blood, and there are people who gained their wealth through dishonest means (54-55).

For similar reasons, the poems and stories of soldiers and legionaries were promoted by the various propaganda departments and institutions of the State. Soldier and legionary literature corresponded to the Ustasha idea that the Croat soldier was a new kind of soldier equally at home with a pen as with a gun. As with worker and peasant literature, it was also a means of reinforcing the idea that the State was the popular will of the entire nation. However, it is likely that it was also an important propaganda tool within the military itself. Most of the poems written by soldiers and legionaries tended to be stirring nationalistic verses concerning death on the battlefield and sacrificing one's life for the greater good of comrades and nation. They almost always presented a highly-idealised view of the life of the soldier so they could be used in the education of military recruits.⁵⁷ Some soldiers also became posthumously famous for their poetry and literature. Pero Kojaković, a devoutly Catholic young Crusader, who had served as a Croatian Legionary on the Eastern Front, dying in action there, was idolised for his morbid poetry about his comrades and death. Likewise, Josip Križanac, a young soldier in Jure Francetić's Black Legion, was similarly hailed after his death in action for his epics about Francetić and his battles with the Partisans in the Kozara Mountains.⁵⁸ By contrast, Ustashas wrote relatively few stories about their experiences as soldiers. However, the stories that were written followed similar themes to poetry: the invincibility of Ustasha soldiers against the odds and their refusal to surrender. In one famous story, a small legion of Ustashas are surrounded by Partisans. When one Ustasha legionary decides to attack the Partisans in the cover of night knowing he will die in the process, he takes three handgrenades – two for his enemies and one for himself. "You know that total annihilation awaits you! I can't allow it!" protests his commanding officer. "This is the only existence for all of us! You must allow it!" he replies.⁵⁹

All this culture was of no use unless it could be viewed by an audience which was itself civilised and refined. Since the Ustashas saw culture as a civilising tool, they endeavoured to make all areas of public and cultural life refined. Sometimes, the attempt to bring what the Ustashas saw as cultured values to public life

appears to have been a lost cause from the very beginning. It is debatable how realistic, for example, the attempt to make footballers behave more respectably towards referees was. Dr Zmaj Filipis of the Croatian Football Union argued that football players should not allow themselves to be taken over by “dark instincts” and a desire for “victory at any cost.” The football player should see his opponent not as an enemy but as a comrade. For this reason, he argued, sport should stay amateur since otherwise sport would become the athlete’s only existence.⁶⁰ The question of player insubordination was becoming enough of a problem for the Croatian Football Union to introduce a strict code of conduct for its members in 1944. Sportsmanship was becoming an issue too with players complaining when they lost matches and often blaming the referee. As far as the Ustashas were concerned, the experience of losing provided the athlete with valuable life lessons and he should endure defeat “in a manly way, through gritted teeth.” It should even be welcomed. “Defeat is a cold douche for an overly-inflated head,” wrote Filipis.⁶¹ This reasoning did not work and by early 1945, the Commissar for Sport, Zdenko Blažeković, felt compelled to introduce a law stipulating that in the case of players walking off the pitch or their conduct stopping a match, they would be suspended and their team punished with the loss of the match. If any further matches could not be played due to the suspension of important players, these matches would also be recorded as a defeat to the opposing team.⁶² Besides demonstrating a lack of refinement, the disrespectful behaviour of some football players towards the referee reflected a breakdown of order and discipline and suggested a worrying lack of respect for authority. Not only the conduct of State athletes was becoming a problem either by 1944. Spectators were also becoming alarmingly unruly. They were insulting the referee, running onto the pitch and booing the opposition. Such things could not be tolerated and club supporters were instructed to leave the referee in peace, even when he made mistakes and even applaud if the opposition won. Spectators who did not heed these warnings could expect to be banned from the football stadium permanently.⁶³

Nor was it just at football matches that citizens were behaving with a deplorable lack of decorum. Radio journals advised their readers to use the wireless

sparingly so that it remained a pleasure. Constant listening was simply vulgar. As late as 1945, it was complaining that listeners did not know how to use their wirelesses in an informed manner.⁶⁴ In the meantime, noting sadly the contrast between the behaviour of Croatian audiences and those he had experienced elsewhere in Europe, the director of the State Theatre in Sarajevo, Ahmed Muradbegović, used his editorial comment in the theatre's official journal as a forum to complain about the general behaviour and conduct of theatre audiences in Sarajevo:

If, for example, a performance (is) arranged for Croat workers, students, young people...and it just so happens, that such an audience does not have sufficient respect for the ambience of the theatre, that it is late for the performance, that it talks throughout the performance, that it expresses certain audible remarks, that it moves around from place to place, or it laughs during the most tragic scenes or applauds at moments which are most inappropriate, then a bad reputation is acquired not only by the audience but the whole of the community to which it belong.⁶⁵

Muradbegović reminded theatre audiences that the theatre was not "created by the State to be some kind of run-of the-mill kindergarten simply for leisure." Rather, it was a bearer of beautiful noble thoughts, "a temple of art and culture" or, in the words of Dušan Žanko, "second only to a religious shrine as a temple of sacredness."⁶⁶ Vladimir Jurčić disagreed. With the creation of the Independent State of Croatia, he argued a new theatrical audience had been born, "perhaps the most respectful and loyal ever." However, even he felt duty-bound to remind the audience how to comport themselves. "The visitor must behave himself," he warned. "He must leave at home all those distasteful habits which accompany his enjoyment of a cinematic presentation. It needs to be pointed out that the cinema is a kind of kindergarten, a modern vaudeville while the theatre is a temple of art, an educational institute for the whole nation."⁶⁷

"Down with the Past!" New Croatian Cinema and Other Futurist Projects

Jurčić's disdain for cinema was certainly not shared by the Ustasha Movement. The Ustashas embraced modern technology and its potential for mass communication wholeheartedly. Technology and modernism were lauded as tools to improve the quality of life and permanently leave the mark of the Ustashas on Croatia. Between 1941 and 1945, the Ustashas formulated grandiose and utopian schemes to transform the capital, Zagreb. One such plan envisaged creating an underground railway system, skyscrapers as communal workers' homes and huge new thoroughfares.⁶⁸ Despite the insistence that the heart of Croatia and its values was the village, the Ustashas were beguiled by modern and futurist ideas for living. This was reflected in the designs for new offices, university faculties, sanatoriums, workers' flats and cafés, many of which were inspired by the works of Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe.⁶⁹ Even churches aimed to use modernist tendencies, placing religious images in a contemporary context; new churches combined ancient notions of Christianity with avant garde and functionalist architectural tastes and tendencies.⁷⁰ These design concepts were also reflected in the schemes of the Ustashas to build workers' settlements which anticipated electrification, communal cafés and swimming pools.⁷¹ The Ustashas also planned to build public sports complexes and swimming pools in the cities and small towns as well as the villages so that workers could relax after a hard day's labour.⁷²

As with city life, the Ustashas were not hostile to cinema itself, but only what they saw as its élitist and cosmopolitan character. In State newspapers, the cinema-goer was often caricatured as a frivolous bourgeois young female who had imbibed not just Yugoslav but also American culture in its entirety.⁷³ They were going to create a new cinema. In 1941, as with all other businesses, cinemas were taken into state ownership. Many of these cinemas had been run by American studio affiliates owned by Jews and Serbs. They were stripped of their businesses and no compensation was paid. In the same year, the first state department for cinematic art, the Commissariat for Film, was established in the Ministry for National Education. By January 1942, the responsibility for film had been transferred to the State Investigative and Propaganda Bureau which had its own

film section and later in 1942 film was transferred to the newly-created Main Commissariat for Propaganda. These various propaganda departments regulated film-making in the State.⁷⁴ In the same year, the State Film Institute, *Croatia Film* (Hrvatski slikopis), was founded. Headed by the former Zenithist writer, Marijan Mikac, the institute had six departments, including a monthly journal, three cinemas and a department for mobile cinema. It received funding from the State and, exceptionally, was exempt from tax regulations.⁷⁵

Initially, the majority of the films made in the new Croatian cinema were news and documentary films. Apart from a regular weekly newsreel, "Croatia in Words and Pictures," propaganda films about the Poglavnik, the new State and also the Ustasha Movement were produced. Some of these educational and documentary films were of a high standard: one documentary celebrating the role of the Black Legion won the gold medal for best documentary film at the La Biennale di Venezia in 1942.⁷⁶ Initially, the premises of new Croatian cinema were less than grand: a tiny office in Preradović Street. Far from being a disadvantage, the Ustasha Movement's cinematic commissars revelled in the humble beginnings of their nascent industry. It was another means by which the Croatian state could compare itself favourably to the old Yugoslav Kingdom. With some justification, Mikac argued that in the Yugoslav era, cinema, despite its greater relative wealth, had been in the hands of those with "no cultural or professional knowledge." In the twenty-three years of its existence, cinema in Yugoslavia had failed to achieve anything significant. When Croatia cinema was founded in 1941, it was, starting from scratch; Yugoslav cinema had not bequeathed it as much as one camera.⁷⁷ Mikac blamed this neglect of the cinematic art on the foreign, Jewish and plutocratic owners of Croat cinema and film production companies who had treated cinema purely as an economic concern, excluding "the masters of world cinematic production."⁷⁸

By contrast, the new Croatian cinema would be a social force which would bring together the old and the young, the rich and the poor and involve the active collaboration of the people. Freed from the need for profit, it could serve the people's "social and artistic needs" and spread education and courtesy. To this

end, cinemas would be built in remote locations; they would be financed by making everyone pay an admission fee to cinemas, including high-ranking state officials. Croatian cinema also dreamed of a grand new film studio – the dream factory – complete with orchestral rooms, soundproof studios and facilities for the filming of underwater shots.⁷⁹ Though the Ustashas' film commissars raved about cinema's artistic and cultural potential as the "art form of our new era" and "a new spirit of expression and a new order" in the world,⁸⁰ ultimately the new Croatian cinema represented a new national cinema. As early as 1942, Tito Strozzi had produced Croatia's first cinematic drama, the experimental, *Barok u Hrvatskoj* (Baroque in Croatia, 1942), which told the story of Count Janko Drašković, an aristocratic politician who advocated a South Slav state, and whose 1832 *Disertacija* (The Dissertation), elaborating his vision of progressive social and political reform, was the first modern Croatian political treatise. In the film, the aged Count looked back on his eventful life and, at one point, a portrait of his wife, the Countess, played by Maria Crnobori, seemed to come to life. However, it was not until 1943 that Croatian cinema produced its one and only full-length feature film, Oktavijan Miletić's *Lisinski*. The film told the life story of Vatroslav Lisinski, the composer of the first Croatian opera. Originally, the Ustashas had wanted to make a film about the life of Ante Starčević, but Miletić, who was not a regime supporter, had refused, fearing the propaganda use the Ustashas would put it to. Miletić's film which starred Branko Špoljar as Lisinski and Srebrenica Jušić as the Countess who believes in him and finances his compositions, premiered in December 1944 at the Cinema Europa in Zagreb, though news stories concerning the film had been appearing in the State media for at least a year.⁸¹ Such publicity was obligatory since investigators at the Chief Commissariat for Propaganda had sent a circular to all newspaper editors requiring them to print regular articles about *Lisinski*, some of which were pre-written.⁸²

Lisinski was a somewhat stagey film and used opera singers and theatre actors who generally had little experience of acting on camera. It received mixed reviews from the critics and Špoljar, in particular, was singled out for criticism.⁸³

However, it contained some memorable scenes and images. One particularly impressive cinematic set piece depicted the demonstration in St Mark's Square to commemorate the 29 July 1845 massacre of Croatian students protesting against Hungarian rule. There was also an effective experimental use of voiceover, narrated by Tomislav Tanhofer. State propaganda represented the film as an extraordinary cultural achievement. Vinko Nikolić called the film "the crowning glory" of Croatian cinema which had filled the hearts of the film community with "ecstatic excitement." What was more, he added, it had been made on a shoestring: "Where are the Croatian cinematic studios, the celluloid palaces, the 'workshops,' the apparatus, the lights, the curtains, the costumes, the actors? Of all of these things, Croatian cinema had little except perhaps the most limited and most essential. But still!...There was a group of people with so much courage, determination and creative aspirations."⁸⁴ Long before the film was released, too, journalists were quick to exploit the propaganda value of the film's message. Milan Katić wrote that the film "speaks to us about the militant ardour of the Croatian youth of this period, speaks to us about the noble bearing of the great movement of idealists whose only aim was the elevation and development of Croatian culture." Other articles could not ignore the fact that the plot of the film gave prominence to the events of 29 July 1845 when "the blood of Croat youth was shed" nor Lisinski's subsequent creative crisis and spiritual resurrection at Marija Bistrica, an important religious symbol for the Ustasha Movement.⁸⁵

The last film completed in the Independent State of Croatia, but never screened, was another drama-documentary film, *Radium – izvor zraka* (Radium – The Source of X-Rays, 1945). It starred Marija Crnobori and Armand Alliger and was a biography of the life of Pierre and Marie Curie. The aim of the film was educational – to show all layers of Croatian society the importance of radium's role in the struggle against cancer and highlight Zagreb's role in this "gigantic war."⁸⁶ Yet until the collapse of the State, new Croatian cinema was conceiving new plans. In July 1944, in an attempt to improve the quality of Croatian films, a competition was launched to find new screenplays and ideas for films from the general public. Croatia could never hope to match European cinema in the

quantity of films it made, it was argued, but it could match them in terms of quality if technical aspects of film-making in Croatia were improved. Entries were classified under cultural films and feature films. Some of the feature film scripts awarded prizes were light frothy comedies such as *Osmi smrtni grijeh* (8 Deadly Sins) which told the parallel stories of two young lovers thwarted by the “malice, selfishness and intrigues” of others and a society bachelor who hates marriage and children but learns to love both. Others were more serious and addressed obviously national themes. For example, *Kondžilo* told the story of an oppressed Muslim wife who leads a life of traditional isolation until she leaves for the “urban zoo” of Sarajevo which she learns is a place of struggle and hardship. The winner, Branko Bellan’s *Odnarodjen* (Deracinated) told the story of a prodigal son living in America and Americanised in “the worst sense of the word,” returning to visit Croatia and his family. While there he falls in love with a girl who his brother, a doctor, also loves. Eventually, he decides to return to America to leave his brother to pursue his relationship with the girl.⁸⁷ Mikac explained to the prize-winners that under current conditions, war and a shortage of premises made the shooting of a feature unthinkable. However, Mikac did consider sending cinematographers to various regions of the State, such as Bosnia and the Adriatic, to scout for locations; there was particular interest in *Kondžilo* and it is not difficult to see why. Through her experiences in Sarajevo, the oppressed heroine rediscovers her patriotic love for the Bosnian homeland, expressed in the screenplay through old Bosnian songs. Most importantly, the film cultivated a “motif of the mutual life and co-operation of the Catholics and Muslims in the past and now.” Nobody said screenplays had to reflect real life.⁸⁸

Revolutionary Ustasha Art: Political-Patriotic Prose, Poetry and Painting

For the Ustashes, 1941 marked the death of one form of literary expression and the birth of a new one. In the same way that they believed an older political generation with its outmoded ideology had made way for a younger generation,

so would the new Croatia herald a new younger generation of poets and writers, who had come to prominence in the inter-war period. They had created a new form of Croatian art based on purity of thought, love of the patriarchal family and closeness to nature. This had protected it from the Jewish and Marxist spirit and all those who wanted to create a Yugoslav literature.⁸⁹ In 1942, the young nationalist poet, Vinko Nikolić, edited an anthology of verse devoted to the works of the younger generation of poets born between 1900 and 1914. The anthology, compared to the poetry of the Young Croatians in 1914, which had included such writers as Tin Ujević, was published, Nikolić said, so that these poets could express their gratitude to the “warriors and victors” whose sacrifices had enabled not only the creation of an independent Croatia but also the rebirth of Croat literature.⁹⁰

While many of the young poets in the anthology were strongly nationalist and some could even be described as Ustasha supporters, many others were not. Ivan Goran Kovačić, for example, who in 1942 fled to Partisan territory with Vladimir Nazon, would ultimately write the most visceral and well-known condemnation of Ustasha genocide, *Jama* (The Pit). For the Ustashes, the writer and artist was the bridge between the Movement and the masses; he communicated their ideology and ideas to the people in a striking and memorable form.⁹¹ Therefore, it was the duty of all healthy writers to be interpreters of the “strength and great ideas contained in the Ustasha movement” and actively participate in the creation of a new state and a new person. Only in this way could an artist be a real son of the homeland and justify his right to an artistic existence and life itself.⁹² They were thus particularly unforgiving of artists who rejected their vision. When Kovačić died in 1943 at the hands of the Chetniks, the critic Verus, commenting on his death and that of August Cesarec, the essayist, wrote that “while the death of August Cesarec carries in itself an aspect of tragedy, in the case of Ivan Goran Kovačić’s death this is not true. His death does not affect one. It leaves one cold.” By contrast, given his towering reputation, until the bitter end, Ustasha officials insisted that Vladimir Nazon had not defected to the Partisans, but had been kidnapped by them.⁹³

The Ustashas, according to Vinko Nikolić, aimed to create a “new nationalistic, Ustasha literature for a new nationalistic, Ustasha Poglavnik Croatia.”⁹⁴ In the first few days and weeks of the State, there were many radical cultural changes which demonstrated to ordinary Croatians that they were citizens of a new State. Along with the national anthem, “Our Beautiful Homeland” the Ustasha anthem, “A Rifle Fires” (1931), written by the Poglavnik, became compulsory at all public events in the State and abroad.⁹⁵ State officials also engaged the sculptor, August Augustinčić, to immortalise the Poglavnik and his wife in bronze relief and another, Rudolf Švigel-Lešić, created stone carvings of Ante Starčević, Eugen Kvaternik and Ante Pavelić to stand in the entrance hall of the Ustasha Main Headquarters. This served as a reminder to the members of the Movement as well as the general public that not only was the Ustasha Movement the bearer of a political ideology that was permanent but that its ideology and its leader were linked to other great Croatian national legends from history.⁹⁶ In addition, to the founding of a museum of the Independent State of Croatia, the Ustashas created a national archive of their Movement which again suggested that they had both history and longevity on its side.⁹⁷ The Ustashas also invented an entire new spectrum of words for everyday objects, activities and places. The most common kinds of changes targeted public entertainment, for instance radio and cinema and communal activities such as football. However, with the rule of the Ustashas, a militant, militaristic and revolutionary language came into force which redefined societal positions and relationships in the State. Ideas of democracy and parliamentarism were replaced with the radical language of cells, camps, communes, commissars and adjutants. Expressions such as “intellectual” and “citizen,” associated with a liberal and capitalist past, largely became terms of abuse; instead, the Ustashas advocated the use of the term “worker” for everyone, from the miner to the university professor. The patriotic intellectual who had supported the Ustasha revolution was classified as a worker along with all others in the State. Those intellectuals who because of their ideological affiliations could not be so classified were viewed as the enemies of the State.⁹⁸ One simple way, the Ustashas believed, to differentiate those who had embraced the national

revolution from those who had not was to observe who employed the new revolutionary greeting, "For the Homeland? Prepared!"⁹⁹

Throughout history, visual art has played a crucial role in the representation and definition of political movements, especially revolutionary ones.¹⁰⁰ Yet, the Ustasha Movement did not embrace images nor rely on them to convey political messages to the same extent as other revolutionary regimes had. They preferred slogans and the imaginative possibilities of rhetoric. The cult of personality of the Poglavnik, for example, owed far more to poetry, radio and film than it did to painting and sculpture since while painting could show one particular moment in time, film, poetry and radio could provide a continuous image of a Movement of action. This is not to say that the Ustashes did not appreciate visual art or its potential to be used for propaganda purposes. Beginning in September 1941, the State organised an annual art exhibition for sculptors and painters of the new Croatia at the Art Pavilion in Tomislav Square. When the works of these artists was exhibited at prestigious fairs in Venice or Berlin, the Ustashes ensured the State took full credit for the artists' success. The Ustashes also attempted to co-opt leading Croatian artists such as Ivan Meštrović, Vanja Radauš and Ljubo Babić, with varying degrees of success. (Meštrović, for example, was chosen to organise an exhibition tour of Croatian art around Europe in 1941.) However, unlike in literature, the Ustasha State produced very little explicitly political art.¹⁰¹

There were some exceptions. Mladen Veža's *The Martyrs of Šibenik* depicted the infamous massacre of Croatian peasants by Yugoslav gendarmes in 1935 and showed them, dressed in traditional white frocks and black waistcoats, bayoneted by grinning, gendarmes: the white of the peasants' dress suggested purity, whereas the gendarmes were shrouded in darkness. The culture of oppression and death in Yugoslavia was portrayed again in Ljubo Babić's *20 June 1928* which evoked the streets of Zagreb in the aftermath of the assassination of Stjepan Radić: it portrayed a dead and deserted city in which menacing gendarmes, rifles on their backs, patrolled the streets.¹⁰² S.R. Zrnovački and Walter Neugebauer's *The Liberation of Croatia* and Gustav Likan's *10 April 1941* addressed the

creation of the state. In the first, a peasant woman, representing Croatia and trapped in a dark dungeon, representing Yugoslavia, is freed by a troop of Ustasha soldiers and the Poglavnik himself, bearing the torch of freedom. In the left-hand corner, a group of Ustasha warriors break the last chains of bondage enslaving the Croat people. The Poglavnik is accompanied by a group of female Ustashes, symbolising the collaboration of women and all sections of society in the liberation struggle. In the second picture, liberated citizens march through the streets of Zagreb with flags and banners. The future of the state was portrayed in Ivan Topolčić's *Ustasha Youth—The Hope of Croatia*, a portrait of two young teenage Ustasha girls (looking straight at the painter with fixed eyes) which captured the militant nature of the Ustasha ideology. Dressed in military uniforms, the painting expresses the determination and resolution of the new generation of Ustashes.¹⁰³

Themes of torture and suffering in inter-war Croatia were more evident and explicit in Ustasha poetry. Memories of imprisonment in Yugoslavia are explored in Gabrijel Cvitan's "The Poem of a Slave" and Vinko Nikolić's "The Crucifixion of Croatia, 1918—1928—19..." In the first, the poet decays and rots alone in his "fetid cell" as the hungry bedbugs devour him. The days of imprisonment are "treacherous steps,/ over which I silently climb." Outside is a world where "spring awakes,/ birds sing and the earth smells" while inside "I am shackled. Like an animal in a cage/ I drag the iron chains around." The poet uses spring as a metaphor for his lost youth. As the prison cell takes away his "strength and beauty" he realises that "For others, the sun shines, and for me it darkens./ While it lives in death—I, dead—still live."¹⁰⁴ In the second, the Croatian nation is again in chains. "Shooting, hanging, a volley of gunfire—a crucifixion without end or hope./ The years of our youth pass without any kind of pleasure.../Life passes. We grow old, we youths suffer—without youth." However, there is also hope in this suffering: "In chains, we dream about freedom" and "our holy Croatia!" For this sacred aim, the youth of Croatia will sacrifice their lives: "We love her boundlessly and for it would give our lives:/ for the land of our grandfathers and fathers—we, the young generation."¹⁰⁵ In Vladimir Jurčić's "Ballad about the

Blood of the Martyred Seven” and “For the Martyrs of Šenj” the poet remembers and commemorates nationalist youths shot by Yugoslav gendarmes in 1937, killed because they were singing poems about a free Croatia and whose blood would imbue later generations with strength and national consciousness. These “ten warm-hearted young bodies/ are now ten black graves” but, like an army, they march fearlessly into battle and, like an army they are “our salvation.” Their “holy poem” provides a clear contrast with “the bullet of the Chetnik.”¹⁰⁶

With the epiphany of the national revolution and Croatia’s war of liberation, the Poglavnik, the symbol of revolution, is immortalised as a Nietzschean superman. For Gabriel Cvitan, he represents the “spring of freedom,” a man who reconciles the bones of “Gubec, Zrinski, Frankopan,/ Kvaternik, Šufflay and Stjepan/ Radić because the Poglavnik and his Ustashas avenged them.”¹⁰⁷ For Cvite Škarpa, the Poglavnik himself possesses “manly will, firm as steel,/ without fear, like a titan, free from defects,/ with a strong intellect, a noble and great heart.”¹⁰⁸ Jakša Erčegović sees something divine and messianic in Pavelić: “You sent us Him, for whom our spirits are on fire...You sent word among the nations/ that You still celebrate one nation, free, greater./ You sent us Him – the victor/ before the triumphal units of Gvožd, Rakovica, Šibinj, Senj, the sleep of the resurrected hero.” From this day “wreathed in sunshine/ our nights will not be so stern, nor our pain so feverish as before/ when there wasn’t Him for whom our hearts roar.”¹⁰⁹ However, the Poglavnik is just the most illustrious example of a new man created by the Ustasha Movement, the new Ustasha Man, the Croat warrior-knight embodied in Jure Francetić. For Vladimir Jurčić, he is an “iron shield,” “a son of the Velebit mountains,” “a knight without fear or vice.”¹¹⁰ In Stjepko Trontl’s “An Ustasha Grave” the martyrdom of the Ustasha warrior, his love for his homeland and his bravery at the moment of death are emphasised: “He was with those that did not lose faith in God or justice.” The Ustasha is a heavenly warrior who is unselfish since when he dies “—the only thought./ ‘Do not cry for me, mother!’/ thus the son wrote.” The final stanza informs us that although he is dead, “He is with us!”¹¹¹ In this poem, the journey of birth, struggle, death and

resurrection underline the tortured life of the Ustasha warrior. It is nothing exceptional: it is merely his fate.

Novels did not address the realities of life in the new State, perhaps because the duration of the State was too short to discern any new social and societal habits or customs; perhaps because writers felt that it was a subject which required an honesty which the Ustashes would not have tolerated; perhaps because poetry was felt to be more immediate and visceral and undoubtedly because the state was constantly short of paper. Whatever the reason, by default, poetry became a barometer of fortunes. Initially, the creation of the Independent State of Croatia was interpreted as a resurrection, divine intervention even.¹¹² In Jerko Skračić's vision of the new Croatia: "Trumpets blast/ bells toll/ flowers bloom/ the day has dawned/ slavery has been crushed, the Ustasha army/ of many martyrs has achieved its dream." Croatia's freedom, born "from blood" also heralds the arrival of a new Messiah, the Poglavnik brought to the Croats by Providence, whose "holy vows will be our command."¹¹³ But in the first days of the new Croatia, there is also a reminder of the terrible cost of liberation. Skračić remembers in his poem, published a mere three days after the national revolution, that "we waited in agony, we struggled a long time/ the whole Homeland was one grave." Nikola Šabić in a poem dedicated to the fallen Ustasha, Nikola Luetić, killed on the very day of Croatian liberation, writes of the "bones of martyrs, dust in dark graves, blackbirds that flock together in sadness."¹¹⁴ In this atmosphere of quasi-religious fervour in the first few months and weeks of the new State, not just professional poets but also members of the general public put pen to paper. The mythology of persecution and suffering in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia could be expressed in terms of simple religious joy. "All the hearts of the oppressed Croat peasants/ waited for You/ the sun and the fields waited for You/ and Croatian flowers/ with a wreath crowned your victorious head/ the bearer of freedom – joy of a new, new happiness," one citizen writes. These amateur poets could also recount the sacrifices of the Croats in the days of liberation: "Banners with proud sacrifices fly/ On them in blood glistens a prayer: 'Poglavnik the First/ give us a resurrection with You/ find love to warm us.'/ Towards you and God prayers

soar: 'May the sun warm the native son!'"¹¹⁵ Popular enthusiasm for the new State could provoke ugly sentiment, however. In one poem, the young Serb King Peter is portrayed as a coward escaping to Jerusalem. In another poem, a writer gloats over the German invasion of Serbia with reference to the Kosovo myth. "Everything has passed like a dream,/ Vidovdan has fallen!/ Where is Dušan's empire?/ Ask – the chief!"¹¹⁶ Most disturbingly, in Matija Pavlović's anthology of patriotic-political prose, there is a paean of praise to the German bombing of Belgrade: "Bravo, bravo, bravo/ and Salonika has now just fallen./ In the quiet, in the middle of peace/ Belgrade is bombed./ It continues to Niš/ the Serbs are falling like raindrops."¹¹⁷

In the beginning, euphoria and national awakening are stressed in poetry. Vladimir Nazor instructs poets to capture the national mood: poets have to be "wolves and bears" and "barbarians" and "To hell with all these zithers and mandolins!" For him, a poet is not a "flower on which a butterfly drowns" but "the roots underneath the earth" which feed the national revolution.¹¹⁸ Mirko Slade-Silović writes: "From the shackles of slavery, a day has bloomed/ red/ white/ and blue,/ made with fortune"¹¹⁹ and Branko Klarić proclaims: "Today I am so happy./...My step is joyful./ This is not an illusion./ And it is not a dream./ There goes a man,/ a free man."¹²⁰ In early styles, love of Croatia is also emphasised: Vinko Kos identifies nature with Croatia: "I feel alive that I belong to these flowers and mountains." The "flower and rock, valley and river" is innate in "every man, woman and child" and "the smooth spring grass, and the bark and branches of the tree trunk/ are decorated with my pride, and fed with my love."¹²¹ With the arrival of the Ustashas, all suffering is over. Ivo Lendić describes how "The sun shines as never before over Croatia.../ The sorrow, the sorrow of thousands disappears, snow melts with the coming of spring!"¹²² August Ćarmati unites the suffering of Croats in the first Yugoslavia and the joy of independence. In Ćarmati's vision, as with the Ustasha ideology, the shedding of blood feeds the new generations. "On the bloody rivers, that flow with the source of martyred wounds,/ sail the white flags of freedom. In them, are woven—with the white of our hope—/ in downcast times/ the thorny paths of final victory." The deceased

lead to victory since “the enemy is always defeated with the dead stormtroopers of the grave.”¹²³

However, this joyous mood falls away and poets begin to emphasise the effects of war on ordinary people, especially the large numbers of refugees created by conflict. Dragutin Zdunić writes that “anyone from another world who saw our appearance/ would say: there you fled from hell.”¹²⁴ Vinko Kos describes the journey of the refugee: “They did not leave anything, even though their bundles/ are pitiful and small. They carry everything at a glance.”¹²⁵ Jerko Skračić imagines that he is a refugee and relates some everyday conversations. In one poem, an old peasant reminisces with his son about his olive tree: “with what love I fastened it/ but hate uprooted me and threw me out.” In the second, a peasant woman dreams of returning to her old home but when told by her son that soon she will be going home, she replies that things will never be the same because her children are no longer alive. Things cannot go back to the way they were before.¹²⁶ Milan Dunavski asks for God to return the refugees to their homes: “this sad youth, that still has dreams/ and this blonde handsome young man, who is living for his grandmother/ and the one that weeps silently, and soon will be completely grey.”¹²⁷ The suffering of the poet, silent witness to the destruction of the nation by Allied bombers, is another constant theme. One poet laments: “I am sad today as if something broke in the world,/ and I remained alone to grieve over this.” Another is resigned to the fact that Croatia is being dismantled and “Everything is past./ Nor can the teachings of the guardian angel/ save any longer the cities/ which are being destroyed.” Others attempt to rally the nation through poetry for a last desperate stand. “We are...Tired, tired. But we are not so exhausted/ that the tears of these millions do not affect us,” writes one poet. He instructs the nation to “lift up the old banners. Let the sun on them/ write with purple flames the words of new victories” because “a whole nation is calling you in defence.”¹²⁸ Blind fury at this turn of events is another common emotion. Jure Pavičić calls the nation’s enemies “Pontius Pilates” who “sing songs to our faces and horribly kill us behind our backs.” For the polemicist Joženko, Stalin’s hand is behind the bombing of Croatia; he is a contemporary Zeus throwing thunderbolts down on

Croatia, the beautiful Athens. Meanwhile, Frano Alfrević relates the obliteration of towns and villages in Croatia through an allegory of Daedalus and Icarus: he sees only “ruins, fragments, fissures” inflicted by those “knights of the air.” He despairs that “everything is complete darkness.”¹²⁹

In the poetry of writers sympathetic to the nationalist cause, the State or the Ustasha Movement, desperation appears to resolve itself in two ways: death and religion. Josip Velebit remembers his dead father who perished in the Great War while Vinko Kos presciently imagines his own death which must come,¹³⁰ as does Branko Klarić who, in what will be his last anthology of poetry, writes that the moment of death when he awaits God will be “my last/ my most beautiful verse,” lasting for eternity. The spectre of death is everywhere and Klarić asks only that death, whom he calls his sister, does not visit him at night but that she “tenderly strokes my damp hair,” and gently calls for him “so that the body before you does not expire in horror.”¹³¹ Jerko Skračić also appears to be saying goodbye, in this case to his passionate youth and also the dreams he had then. To his adored son he writes: “In my youth, darling child/ strongly roared the thunder/ frequently fights broke out/ there was a lot of lightning!”¹³² Elsewhere, in a literary journal, he recalls his formative childhood memories, when life was safe and secure, not perilous and uncertain, as the fate which awaits him and his nation surely is. Prophetically, Gustav Krklec writes, foreshadowing the destiny of Skračić, Klarić and so many others: “in your whole life you can suffer/ because of one wish, one desire, one aim.”¹³³

From the start, regime poets dwell on the heroic lonely moment of death of the Ustasha on the battlefield, dying as “a cascade of blood gushes from his mouth.”¹³⁴ The deceased soldier and his communication with the living is a favourite theme of poetry about Ustasha warriors. Vinko Kos writes to one young man as if he were alive: “surely in your grave you yearn and dream of a return/ in the hope that those whom you left sad are waiting for you.”¹³⁵ The literary vogue for poetry about graves becomes so pronounced that in some poems the grave is not merely the instrument through which the dead would speak but a living thing in itself.¹³⁶ For some poets, this is going too far. Jerko Skračić urges his fellow

poets: "Do not talk to me constantly about graves, comrades,/ Do not mention crosses, cypresses, ghosts./ We must live./ We must fight in this storm,/ We must travel towards the goal far, far away,/ To sail, to sail, comrades, against the current."¹³⁷ The poetry of the nationalist poets is also bloody and gory, relating massacres of Croats in graphic detail. Many poems concentrate on real life atrocities committed by the enemies of the State, the Chetniks and the Partisans. For example, Šukrija Mujezinović's poem about a massacre in Foča is based on a real event in 1942 when Chetniks slaughtered local Muslims and threw them off the bridge: "One after the other, peacefully in the still of night/ they gave their lives;/ they were the first in Foča/ that in their own blood drowned the Drina Bridge,/ While their daughters, mothers and children/ had to wash themselves on Bajram on the bridge/ in their families' blood."¹³⁸ Yet, by the end, Croatia is not just ravaged by the atrocities of savages, but drowning in a sea of apocalyptic violence. In the poetic imagination, Croatia is awash in blood. Željko Jambresić writes that "On the Drina there floats a bloody trail.../ The bank smashed from waves of blood."¹³⁹ In Vladimir Jurčić's "The Eternal Guard," by 1944, the Drina is no longer a dividing line between two worlds, the East and the West, but a "bloody canyon" in which the "blood of martyrs,/ dead murdered brothers/ and wretched daughters" float. Now it is the watery grave of the Black Legion, a place where "fallen brothers swim and dream" a roaring eddy where dead legions "secretly meet."¹⁴⁰

Religion, with its cycle of birth, death and resurrection is the last consoling refuge. Nikola Sop asks Jesus to stay with him eternally no matter what may befall him and Branko Klarić observes the pain of the city and the aimless lives of its citizens while the Madonna stands in front of the cathedral offering her blessings.¹⁴¹ Religious themes concerning the punishment and salvation of the nation began early. However, as the State collapses and apocalypse approaches, it comes to predominate, along with death, as a theme. By 1944, poets like Branko Klarić are asking the Virgin Mary for help. They paint a tragic and pitiful picture of their Homeland: "Our homes have been destroyed, like altars in the days of the torture of the Christians/ and like our souls/ the air is full of deadly roars." He

reminds her: "My Croatian Homeland never denied your dear Son./ Thus it is just and merciful that you lead it to salvation/ from this oil and fire."¹⁴² Does the Virgin Mary hear his prayers? He does not say. At the last, he imagines Christ speaking to pedestrians on the streets of Zagreb and asking them why they have abandoned him and fallen away from his teachings. Although the poet is alone, in the hour of need of the Croatian people, when "a storm spreads over you/ and when you seek salvation everywhere," Christ reminds the Croats that they are still his children. Like Jesus, Klarić seems to be saying Croatia is being crucified for its sins. Only by returning to God can the Croatian nation be saved.¹⁴³

Writing the Revolution: Mara Švel's The Oak

Despite the fact that the Independent State of Croatia was supposed to have liberated Croatia from twenty years of oppression and persecution, no novelist saw fit to address life in the new state: this, as we have seen, was left to poetry and, to a certain extent, visual art. Novelists who wrote about the national struggle in the years between 1928 and 1945 tended to concentrate on the pre-war struggle of Croatian university students, peasants or workers.¹⁴⁴ In the years between the founding of the Ustasha Movement in 1929 and its seizure of power in 1941, the Ustashas and their supporters wrote a number of novels chronicling the Ustasha struggle. The most famous of these were Thomas Vitezović's *Die Anderen* (The Others, 1934), Mile Budak's *Na vulkanima* (On the Volcanoes, 1941), whose portrayal of the men of the Ustasha Movement would later cause an uproar amongst the higher echelons, and Ante Pavelić's *Lijepa plavka* (The Beautiful Blonde Woman, 1935), written in exile in Italy, the study of a female Ustasha terrorist.¹⁴⁵ If the national struggle in novels ceased to be explored in 1941, the Ustasha struggle after 1941 in the new Croatia continued to be glorified in short stories by both Ustashas and their literary supporters.¹⁴⁶

In the Independent State of Croatia, nationalist patriotic-prose glorifying the Ustasha struggle was not always warmly received, even by nationalist critics. As

already discussed, when Zlatko Milković's study of student nationalist struggle, *Tamnica*, was published in 1942, critics highlighted its ideological as well as literary shortcomings, not least the fact that the novel seemed to ignore wider Croatian society outside the University of Zagreb.¹⁴⁷ Mara Švel's *Hrast* (The Oak, 1942) should have been on safer ground insofar as it told the story of the war of national liberation through eyes of a young peasant couple. Yet Tomislav Pavić, who had been so critical of Milković, complained that Švel's novel demonstrated neither a deep understanding of the difficulties of life, a well-developed conflict or believable characters. He also criticised the contrived nature of many of the key scenes in the novel, singling out Nada's visit to a Freemason's temple in Belgrade. "Everyone knows it would be never be that easy and straightforward to go into their temple and see what they do there," he complained¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, *Hrast* is perhaps the most complete literary study of the Ustasha struggle and its impact on the homeland and the masses. Using the metaphor of the birth and death cycles of an oak tree as a symbol of Croatia, it tells the story of Marko and Nada Ivnačić, who fight for both social and national justice in their village. The themes of the novel—the cruelty of the Serbian regime, the greed and duplicity of Jews, the alien and artificial nature of the cosmopolitan city—make it the paradigmatic novel of Ustasha Croatia.¹⁴⁹

The quest of the Ivnačić family for justice is based around their desire to increase the productivity of their farm. To do this, they are required to secure a loan from a bank in Belgrade. Whilst in Belgrade Nada meets an old school friend, Vera, who has recently become divorced from her husband. The reason for this soon becomes clear: her husband, Fedor, has acquired fame as a writer and poet. As Vera tells it, Fedor has fallen in with a sexually dissolute artistic crowd. By contrast, Nada when asked by her friend what she does, can only reply: "I have not really got much to say about myself. I have two sons, a husband whom I love and I live in a village. That is all." Yet this modest ambition provides for Nada a contented life, whilst sophisticated unhappy Vera has not only lost her husband, but also, we later learn, her son to illness [108-9]. Everything about Nada's visit to Belgrade to secure a loan disgusts her and reveals the hatred of the cosmopolitan

city: an official at the Ministry of Agriculture asks her out on a date even though he knows she is married; the secretaries she encounters are frivolous and lazy; she visits the cinema and sees a tiresome Marlene Dietrich film. Yet the foreign nature of Belgrade does not just exist in the novel as the differences between Serbs and Croats, but also serves to represent the way in which the Serbs have embraced a cosmopolitan culture. The bank managers and directors she meets speak in fashionable French phrases and when her husband returns to Belgrade after an absence of twelve years, he observes:

At the table next to his, they spoke Greek and at another Hungarian and...in one corner, a black man sat drinking tea. No, this was not the Belgrade of Nušić—as Marko remembered—a provincial city with an oriental character; the centre of the city gave an impression of an international citadel which had wiped away all its special traditions... These Babylonian towers of the nouveau riche did not please Marko, did not mean as much as one morning on the cherished land...He felt physically as if a wave of hatred rose in him above this modern Sodom which called itself the capital city of Yugoslavia (89-90).

In fact, the alienation of the city is set up as an opposite to the countryside which has been neglected by the regime.

Somewhere in the cities they built skyscrapers and dreamt about asphaltting the roads and motorisation, sport and cultural life and somewhere village houses leaked and fell to pieces and tractor wheels broke under potholed roads...Somewhere, tired, thin horses stopped pulling the plough and looked at their exhausted masters as somewhere else modern automobiles, black and awkward as huge bumblebees, glide over asphalt (161).

In this attack on the city and urban sophistication, the Jewish servants of the Yugoslav state are most demonised. They are portrayed as cruel effeminates and hermaphrodites. The director of the bank, for example, reads passages from the Talamud which justifies Jewish enslavement of Gentiles (114). Jews are also, unsurprisingly, depicted as ersatz Serbs and we learn that the bank director is a convert to Orthodoxy and a government supporter. The Serbs, for their part, are stereotyped as ersatz Jews and after his assassination, Nada describes King

Aleksandar as a Serb Shylock, the embodiment of “all the craftiness, hypocrisy, shrewdness that Serbs sought and expected in their leaders in this state...a Byzantine, a tyrant, an usurer and criminal” (168).

As the novel builds to a crescendo, future violence against the Serbs and Jews is justified. Since the Serbs demonstrate their cruel and aggressive chauvinism, a chauvinism which only intensifies as the Great-Serb Yugoslav state collapses under the weight of German bombing, Croats are entitled to and must defend themselves. Marko warns his co-workers: “The Germans need not fear Yugoslavia, but we fear the Serbs if this war does not quickly end. We will be prepared for them in every way, because I do not know of any ancient hatred as the hatred of the Serbs for the Croats.” As Yugoslavia collapses, her young son informs Nada that “black Chetniks are coming to slaughter women and children.” [183, 198]. As Croatian people begin to be driven from their homes by Chetnik bestiality, women, including Nada, whose husbands have been arrested, crowd into the local church and ask the Madonna to save them. The pietism and victim mentality of the novel and the dehumanising of perceived enemies of Croatia, allows for moral violence. One village elder, Jole Šumarov, warns of the violence that will come. “I have experienced good and evil. Foreign masters always operated in an alien manner. They existed and then they left, ha ha. They disappeared as if the wind had carried them away and Croatia was left with the graves of her ancestors and the strength and willpower of the young” (146,154). In the denouement, the Ustashes descend on Zagreb and villages and towns throughout Croatia, and liberate Croatia and its imprisoned people. In the final pages, Nada and Marko are reunited and listen back at the family hearth to Slavko Kvaternik announce the foundation of the Independent State of Croatia, as they vow to expel the hated and despised Serbs from their beautiful homeland. *Hrast* is the chronicle of a genocide foretold.

Croatia Restituta, Ustasha Avant Garde: Cults of Modernism and Tradition

The Ustasha state aimed to synthesise ancient traditions and myths with modern aesthetic tastes. The poet August Ćarmati wrote that the new state “joined the old glory with the brilliance of the new dawn.”¹⁵⁰ This synthesis of ancient national myths and artistic modernity, which had also been a feature of romantic Yugoslavism, was the vision of nationalist Croatian students in the 1920s who had sought to create a contemporary kingdom of King Tomislav. This desire had also been obvious in the works of avant-garde and bohemian writers and poets in Croatia in the 1900s. Vladimir Nazor and Anton Gustav Matoš both fused modernist imagery and national myths. The mythical murder of the medieval King Zvonimir, by his nobles and the curse that was subsequently placed on Croatia, is a legend which resonates in Croatian history and which has played a pivotal role in its politics and literature. The role it played in the Independent State of Croatia was no less pivotal, though for all the wrong reasons. King Zvonimir ruled Croatia between 1075 and 1089 and, according to legend, under his rule, Croatia entered a golden period. However, after Pope Gregory requested his assistance in a crusade his nobles had him murdered because they feared it was a dangerous undertaking. With this act, Croatia was doomed to foreign rule as a punishment for regicide. On 15 May 1941, a legal decree declared the Crown of King Zvonimir was the bearer of Croatian sovereignty and, according to the Ustasha press, resurrected the old Kingdom of Zvonimir. On 18 May in Rome, Pavelić signed the Rome Agreement with Benito Mussolini, offering the Croatian Crown to the Italian House of Savoy as well as half of Dalmatia, in return for Italian support for his State. The Italian occupation of Dalmatia understandably caused uproar amongst many Croats as well as members of the Ustasha Movement itself. The choice of Duke of Spoleto as the new King of Croatia was hardly popular either. Needless to say, there was no celebration. On the contrary, at the official ceremony to commemorate the Agreement, guests were checked for knives and weapons. However, the Ustashes attempted to make the best of a bad job. Not only did they make grandiose plans to have the Duke crowned at Dušan’s Field, but they also appeared to argue that they had lifted the curse of King

Zvonimir. Against all evidence, they claimed that accepting an Italian duke for king did not imply a loss of sovereignty. Rather, they proclaimed that “as long as there is Zvonimir’s crown, Croatia cannot be and will not be an integral part of any other state, at no price, and under no conditions.”¹⁵¹ Indeed, on the day the Rome Agreement was signed, the leading Ustasha newspaper published August Šenoa’s famous poem, dedicated to the eight-hundredth anniversary of the coronation of King Zvonimir containing the lines: “A kingdom we are,/ we are not slaves.”¹⁵² Artists were also called upon by the regime to depict Zvonimir’s regal glory, whether at his coronation or attending the Sabor at Split: the implication was that the Ustashas, and Pavelić in particular, were his successors.¹⁵³

King Zvonimir was one of only a number of historical figures and legends from Croatia’s glorious past who was reinterpreted to fit the prevailing ideology in the State.¹⁵⁴ For all their modernity, the Ustashas worshipped the glories of the Croatian medieval Kingdom and a cult of medievalism became an integral part of the cultural life of Croatia. The creation of a Croatian Sabor in 1942, with its reproduction of the corporate guild system of medieval society in which the various estates would come to worship the leader, was simply one example. The medieval Croat chequerboard flag, the *šahovnica*, became the symbol of the state and Ustashas and soldiers fallen in battle, most famously Colonel Jure Francetić and Krune Devčić, were posthumously awarded the title of knight. In addition, medals awarded to soldiers were named in honour of Zvonimir and King Tomislav, the ruler of the last independent Croatian state and the Ustashas constantly compared themselves whether in stamps, books, poems plays or agit prop to Croatian heroes, legends and martyrs from the nation’s past such as Peter Svačić, Zrinski, Frankopan and Matija Gubec. King Tomislav, in particular, became a cultic figure of the Ustasha Movement. Immortalised in stone by the sculptor, Robert Frangeš Mihanović in 1910 as a fierce, armour-clad warrior, an iconic image needless to say appropriated by the Ustashas,¹⁵⁵ he was also the subject of plays and operas which attempted to give him a contemporary relevance, such as Tito Strozzi’s play, *Tomislav* (1944). In a review of Strozzi’s play, the critic Vladimir Kovačević, argued that Tomislav still lived in the souls of

Croatians as “the creator of the Croatian state, as a man of power, great and noble, as a warrior and a man of the Adriatic.” Although he appreciated the patriotic and dramatic qualities of the play, with its royal speech to future generations, he was disappointed that the humanity of Tomislav was interpreted as the personal doubt of a man rather than as his belief in the future of the Croat nation.¹⁵⁶ If this all seemed too high-flown and ambiguous, then other operas written by writers more sympathetic to the regime depicted him as God’s chosen representative on earth and the precursor to those other all-powerful rulers of Croatia, Ante Pavelić and his Ustashas.¹⁵⁷

As much as the Ustashas admired Tomislav and Zvonimir, they positively worshipped those nineteenth-century nationalist martyrs, the revolutionary leader, Eugen Kvaternik, and the national philosopher, Ante Starčević. They argued that the ideology of Starčević and the action of Kvaternik represented the synthesis of ustaštvo which was itself a philosophy a creed of activism. In the nationalist Croatia of the 1860s Ante Starčević and Eugen Kvaternik had been close political collaborators in the Croatian Party of Rights. In 1871, Kvaternik had launched a fateful uprising against Austro-Hungarian rule in the garrison town of Rakovica. The revolution was a dismal failure and he was executed along with many of his young supporters. Yet for decades afterwards, he was celebrated in national literature and poetry as the epitome of Croatian heroism, dying for a free Croatia along with the flower of Croatian youth. Eugen Kvaternik’s doomed rebellion of 1871 almost guaranteed he would become an idol of the Ustasha Movement. The similarities with the 1932 Ustasha uprising in the Lika were simply too evocative to avoid. In writing his history and that of his uprising, State ideologues tended to see him as the first, nineteenth-century Ustasha and his followers as the first Ustasha legion.¹⁵⁸ The cult of Kvaternik and Rakovica also profoundly appealed to student nationalist youth, who not only viewed the uprising as the apotheosis of ustaštvo, but also saw themselves in Kvaternik’s followers. They recalled that many of his legionaries on that day, including his closest collaborator, Vjekoslav Bach, who died with him, were students at the University of Zagreb. Some Ustasha students like Stanislav Polonjio, the brother

of a fallen Ustasha martyr, demanded that the date of the Rakovica uprising be made a national holiday.¹⁵⁹ This did not come to pass. However, the anniversary of the revolt was commemorated with fanfare for this Croatian revolutionary who had inspired not just their ideology but also their slogans.¹⁶⁰ One poet wrote that Kvaternik was “the uncrowned king of Croatia” while for another he was “a high priest of our faith and a servant at the temple of Croatia” and truly the “first Ustasha.”¹⁶¹

If Kvaternik was seen as the revolutionary forefather of the Movement, then Ante Starčević was claimed as its ideological father. One book instructed all Ustashas to think of Starčević when carrying out their state duties while others proclaimed that without Starčević there would have been no Independent State of Croatia. Starčević’s centrality to the Ustasha state was recognised on 16 May each year, a holiday declared Ante Day, to celebrate his life and work. Literary and state prizes, named after him, were also awarded on this day and officials commemorated him by making an annual pilgrimage to his grave at Šestine which was kept vigil over day and night by an Ustasha honour guard.¹⁶² Yet Ante Day was not simply a day to celebrate the contributions of a nineteenth-century nationalist politician. It was also a day to recognise the achievements of his supposed acolyte, Ante Pavelić. It was another way to inextricably link the ideas of Starčević with those of the Ustashas, to suggest that they were the only genuine expression of Croatdom. Indeed, Starčević, Ante Radić and Pavelić, the three Antes were, the Ustashas declared, “a political trinity which is every bit as sacred for us as the Holy Trinity is for all Catholics.”¹⁶³ Starčević, like Kvaternik, was remade as a contemporary Ustasha: like the model Ustasha, he was the son of peasants born in the Lika Mountains who despised the usurious Jews since they were always thinking of ways to exploit the Croatian peasantry. Like the Ustashas, he had led the Croatian people to “the promised land, engineering their escape from Sodom and Gomorrah, slavery and oppression.”¹⁶⁴ Moreover, as with dead Ustasha martyrs, Starčević’s spirit lived on. In poems, Starčević was the ever-present father of the nation arising from the grave in 1941 to watch over and protect the Independent State of Croatia.¹⁶⁵

Not just in spirit, but also in stone, the Ustashas wanted to ensure that the image of Starčević would endure as an integral component of their new State. Therefore, in 1942, the Ustashas organised a competition to design a grandiose Starčević statue which would be erected in the centre of Zagreb. The statue would “synthesise the spirit of his texts, thoughts, work and realise the penetrating vision of a giant, the banner of a nation, an uncompromising politician, a leader, speaker, educator and teacher.” If the Ustashas wanted monumentalism, then they were to be very disappointed. Few of the designs impressed the critics; they simply were not striking enough. The design that came closest depicted Starčević in front of an enormous open book, flanked on one side by Croatian workers and, on the other, by Ustashas. This was the synthesis of tradition and modernity the Ustashas craved. The main problem was the planned location for the statue. Its situation, next to a hotel, was thought to be entirely inappropriate for a place of commemoration since it was felt that the activities of a hotel balcony which included dancing, smoking and drinking would “profane the sublime person of the father of the nation.”¹⁶⁶

Despite this puritanical frame of mind, the Ustashas were perfectly willing to embrace profanity when it seemed advantageous to do so and allowed artists to indulge in a bohemian and avant garde kind of behaviour they would not have permitted in their political icons. Artists simply lived by different rules, they argued. The true artist had to be controversial; he was not “an automaton who would be wound up by others,” as one nationalist writer expressed it.¹⁶⁷ Instead, as another wrote, the Ustasha State should laud the “exotic, fetishistic, discrete and ecstatic” bohemian constantly shocking and defying society, as the essence of anti-bourgeois sentiment.¹⁶⁸ This reasoning allowed the Ustashas to claim all manner of deceased and living bohemian and avant garde artists as fellow travellers. With some artists, this was less problematic. For example, national bards such as August Šenoa, August Hrambašić, Silvije Strahimir Kranjević and Djuro Arnold could all enter into the contemporary Ustasha canon because, as one writer explained, whatever the political opinions and artistic bents of such poets, “they loved the soil of their Croatia and their hearts bled for her

tribulations.”¹⁶⁹ Poets like Kranjević, Šenoa and Hrambašić created epic cycles of national suffering, struggle and revenge and cultural commissars could see in their poetry a direct line to modern Ustasha verse.¹⁷⁰

With other poets, it is not as clear-cut. The impressionist poet and journalist, Antun Gustav Matoš, ostensibly was an obvious cultural icon. As a follower of Josip Frank and the idol of the Young Croats at the turn of the century, he had, if we remember, until his death in 1914, rejected political union with the Serbs and refused to recognise the Serbs as an ethnic group in Croatia. He also had an ambiguous attitude towards the Jews. Moreover, one of his most famous poems, *Epitaf bez trofeja* (An Epitaph Without a Trophy), had glorified the failed revolution of Kvaternik and Bach at Rakovica. In October 1941, this poem was rewritten by Petar Grgec to make it more relevant to the Ustasha Movement.¹⁷¹ In other ways too he seemed to be a good role model. Both his mother and his brother declared themselves committed supporters of the new regime. Milan Matoš noted that his brother’s “radiant pen” had awakened the national consciousness. The implicit suggestion was that, had he not died in 1914, he too would have been an Ustasha acolyte. In an interview his mother recalled too that her son had always been opposed to the bourgeoisie, money and marriage; this, of course, appealed to the Ustasas’ own anti-bourgeois ideology.¹⁷² It was perhaps small wonder then that nationalist poets and writers composed verses in his honour nor that Ustasha students quoted his most fiery and nationalistic statements as axioms of revolutionary Ustasha thought.¹⁷³ Towards the end of his life, however, Matoš had dreamed of a cultural union between Croatia and Serbia and came to regard Serbs as brothers. By the turn of the century, he was expressing his impatience with the slow pace of progress towards a shared South Slav consciousness in Zagreb and Belgrade and, on the occasion of the visit of the Croatian student delegation to Belgrade in 1904, wrote: “Accept, Uncle Black George, the unhappy children of Zvonimir, because they are your scattered children.”¹⁷⁴ This aspect of his ideology was simply ignored. He remained just the wild bohemian nationalist genius, in Zlatko Milković’s words, “a painter for whom his pen is his brush, his words colours and his pallet the whole world. A man who has absorbed the whole

of the European spirit but through the filter of the Croat soul.”¹⁷⁵ The same could be said of another celebrated but dead avant garde poet brought into the Ustasha canon, Antun Branko Šimić, the surrealist. Not only had he railed against bourgeois morals and lauded prostitution, but he had written of Zagreb with contempt, describing it as “small, not once, but a thousand times too small.”¹⁷⁶

Although the Ustashas often looked on contemporary Croatian writers with scorn, contrasting their decrepit and helpless behaviour to the “whole legions of splendid Croatian youth,” peasants, workers and citizens who had been at the forefront of the Ustasha revolution, for living geniuses they were prepared to make exceptions.¹⁷⁷ The surrealist Tin Ujević, whose poetry was published in various cultural journals, was embraced and lauded by the regime despite his well-known Yugoslavism and bohemian lifestyle and he was persuaded to edit a cultural journal for overseas Croat workers.¹⁷⁸ The regime media revelled in his decadent, anarchistic and bohemian lifestyle.¹⁷⁹ Even clericalist and nationalist critics who had previously hated his work, could be persuaded to change their opinion. The critic and poet, Ivo Lendić, who a few years before had condemned his individualistic, anti-religious and anarchic tendencies, now lauded him as “the most superior contemporary Croat poet and erudite” who had immeasurably enriched Croatian literature.¹⁸⁰ Nationalist students also leapt to his defence. Zdravko Brajković, a key collaborator in the *Plug* journal, poured scorn on the low-brow masses who claimed that they could not understand his poetry: “They complain they do not understand the poems of Tin Ujević and that they are not poems for the masses, but this is not such a tragedy: the masses indulge in jazz music, dancing and trashy movies. This is a far greater tragedy.”¹⁸¹

Even a writer as apposite to the Ustashas and their ideology as Ivo Kozarčanin was not merely tolerated, but found a posthumous place in the Ustasha canon. Kozarčanin, whom Nikolić had included in his anthology of the new generation of Croatian poets, was known as a leftist and his poems discussed sex, women, alienation, infidelity, suicide, starvation. These were hardly themes the Ustashas embraced.¹⁸² However, since he had been accidentally shot by a Serb gendarme in early 1941 after wandering into an army barracks, he could be seen as the victim

of the Yugoslav regime. In the Independent State of Croatia, he was hailed as yet another great national artistic worker shot down in the prime of his youth and at the height of his talent by the tyrants in Belgrade just weeks before Croatia was “liberated.” A few months after his death, Marko Čović wrote a poem of commemoration for him and Mirko Vutuc addressed him as if he were still alive, asking him if he felt lonely in his grave.¹⁸³ The national media also announced with great pride that his “murderer” had been caught. The need to commemorate Kozarčanin’s death reflected the macabre and morbid preoccupations of regime poets between 1941 and 1945 and, let it be said, many anti-regime and Partisan poets; it was, after all, a time of war, destruction and insecurity. Undoubtedly, too, the desire to commemorate such an illustrious poet and writer as Kozarčanin served its own propaganda purpose – contrasting an artificial and brutal state, Yugoslavia, that killed its writers with one that honoured them, new Croatia. However, given his popularity amongst the Ustasha youth too, could his popularity have been due to the fact that in his poems of alienation and death and his visions of apocalypse as well as in his social conscience and opposition to injustice, the Ustashes saw a reflection of their own former outsider status?

CONCLUSION

Art and mass culture were an integral propaganda tool of the Ustashes. Through a utilitarian use of mass culture, they believed that they could win the population to their cause, convincing them that, in so doing, they were part of a truly national movement. The most modern forms of communication – cinema and radio - were used to propagate the Ustasha message since they had the capacity to reach the most people. Nonetheless, since the Ustashes also appropriated the works of nineteenth-century poets and writers as well as ancient national legends

and traditions, the Ustashas could claim that they were the inheritors of the mantle of traditional Croatian nationalism, now simply placed in a modern form. As the Ustasha Movement believed that mass culture would allow them to communicate their ideology to the nation, securing the support of artists was paramount. Threats, incarceration, death, imprisonment and financial rewards were all used in an attempt to gain the collaboration of illustrious artists.

However, it would be wrong to suggest that the Ustashas saw art and culture simply as utilitarian tools of the power of the will. As much as an ideological and political movement, they also saw themselves as an educational movement, and as a movement of workers and peasants. They believed that art and mass culture could be used as an engine of social progress to raise far-flung and remote villages above backwardness and to acculturate the masses in general. Not only did the Ustashas envision a state in which the masses would become cultured, developing finer tastes, more refined habits, better manners, but also one in which the masses would actively participate in the spreading of culture. Nor would it be strictly true to say that the Ustasha Movement failed in attracting artists to its cause. Many, as has been shown, rallied to the regime. Some were undoubtedly placed under enormous pressure to collaborate, not the least of which, it seems, was financial pressure as economic conditions in Croatia in this period were truly terrible. Many artists too found their work appropriated by the Movement and were powerless to prevent it. However, other poets and writers wrote and performed for the regime because they shared its values, its ideology and its aesthetic tastes. They wanted to be part of what they perceived as this extraordinary expression of national unity.

The art produced between 1941 and 1945 in Croatia varied greatly in its quality. Much of it was ideological and of little lasting artistic value (as much of the art in Communist Yugoslavia would be). It would be wrong, as Communist historians argued in the post-war decades, that the Independent State of Croatia produced no art of worth. On the contrary, the poems of Branko Klarić, Dražen Panjkota and Jakša Erčegović and the paintings of Ivan Topolčić and Gustav Likan might have stood the test of time had they been produced for a different less violent

ideology. The poem Klarić wrote to commemorate the death of Colonel Jure Francetić might have been a highly-charged and visceral poem about the pain of bereavement, but what is remembered is the criminal deeds and sadism of the person it was written for. Aestheticism is superseded by ethical and ideological repulsion.

Ironically, the art and mass culture produced in Croatia between 1941 and 1945 was the truest face of the Ustasha Movement. The art of regime poets, writers and painters personified the belief of the Ustashas that they were decent, just and moral people, incapable of iniquity. Yet it also seethed with nihilistic aggressive loathing, fear and destructive impulses. Since the Ustasha Movement had no artistic vision or aesthetic preferences, the art of the Independent State of Croatia was, and could be, incredibly diverse and the Movement embraced every artistic taste and fashion. The mass culture of the Ustashas, technological and modern and associated with the urban world, was at odds with their often idealised romantic view of the village and small town. In the art and mass culture produced during the years of Ustasha rule, one sees the inherent contradictions of a political movement in which perhaps the greatest contradiction was that a movement of such extreme violence and nihilistic destruction, a movement so associated with a philosophy of death and genocide, could produce literature and art which was so sentimental. The Ustashas were artists of destruction and, for the Ustasha Movement, cruelty was beauty.

NOTES

- ¹ Kaplan (1986), in her study of French fascist writers, comes close to presenting the work of Robert Brasillach, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle et al. as worthless.
- ² The suppression of the nationalist activities of *Matica Hrvatska* was retold by Jurišić (1941), 264-8. The history of *Matica Hrvatska* between 1941 and 1945 is told in Ravlić (1963), 194-98.
- ³ *Ustaša*, December 1940.
- ⁴ *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 8: 2, 15 December 1942, 122-23.
- ⁵ *Spremnost*, 28 February 1942.
- ⁶ *Spremnost*, 1 February 1942.
- ⁷ *Spremnost*, 3 November 1942, *Spremnost*, 16 April 1942.
- ⁸ See, for example, Frančević (1959), 226, Vučetić (1960), 87, Vaupotić (1964), 236-39.
- ⁹ See, for example, Vaupotić's views on Dražen Panjkota and Vladimir Brodnjak in *ibid*, 237.
- ¹⁰ Lašić, 3 (1989), esp. 24-109.
- ¹¹ See, for example, Ben-Ghiat (2001), Stone (1998).
- ¹² *Novi list*, 6 June 1941.
- ¹³ Donat (1995), 64-80.
- ¹⁴ Junašević and Šantek (1942), 972-3.
- ¹⁵ For example, in June 1941, the Ustashas arbitrarily introduced a law giving the Movement exclusive rights to the work of Eugen Kvaternik and Ante Starčević. Junašević and Šantek (1942), 121.
- ¹⁶ *Hrvatski narod*, 16 August 1941.
- ¹⁷ Barac (1943), 549-56.
- ¹⁸ Turcinec (2000), 79-90, Hergešić (1945), 215-22.
- ¹⁹ MUP/NDH/303/223/151.
- ²⁰ HIS/NDH/18/31-996/262-497.
- ²¹ For example, the Chief Bureau for Propaganda banned both Cherubin Šegvić's *U prvim mjesecima stvaranja Nezavisne Države Hrvatske* and Matija Pavlović's anthology of poetry, *Za dom spremni!* GRP/NDH/45/237/IV/24, GRP/NDH/ 12/237/14376/42.
- ²² GRP/NDH/1/237/1942-5/VT/1/156, GRP/NDH/44/237/11755/43.
- ²³ Regarding the history of the newspaper, see Macan (1998).
- ²⁴ *Novi list*, 17 May 1941, *Hrvatski branik*, 17 May 1941. See also Turcinec (2000), 79-90.
- ²⁵ Bzik (1942 b), 14.
- ²⁶ Bzik (1942 c), 18, *Hrvatski narod*, 10 June 1942.
- ²⁷ Bzik (1942 c), 101-102.
- ²⁸ *Hrvatski krugoval*, 19 October 1941.
- ²⁹ See, for example, *Ustaša*, 20 June 1943.
- ³⁰ Kolar-Dimitrijević (1976), 221-31.

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- ³¹ *Socijalni rad*, 10: September 1937, Petrović (1943), 124.
- ³² See, for example, Bzik (1942 c), 114-18, Blaškov (1943), 120.
- ³³ Seitz (1943), 11-37, Cerovac (1943), 191-207, *Spomen-knjiga prve obljetnice Nezavisne Državne Hrvatske* (1942), 303-36.
- ³⁴ *Hrvatska krajina*, 20 May 1941, Belić and Junasević (1942).
- ³⁵ *Hrvatski krugoval*, 19 October 1941.
- ³⁶ *Hrvatski krugoval*, 19 October 1941.
- ³⁷ See, for example, Bokavoy's comments in Bokavoy (2003), 116-122. In many accounts of the Ustashas, their predominantly peasant roots are continually stressed.
- ³⁸ *Alma mater Croatica*, 5: 4, December 1941, 172.
- ³⁹ *Hrvatski list*, 9 January 1944, *Spremnost*, 28 November 1943, *Hrvatski narod*, 27 October 1942. The Ustashas believed this could be achieved in six years.
- ⁴⁰ *Hrvatski radio list*, 5 October 1941.
- ⁴¹ *Hrvatski krugoval*, 5 April 1942.
- ⁴² *Hrvatski krugoval*, 8-21 June 1944, *Hrvatski krugoval*, 6-19 October 1944, *Hrvatski krugoval*, 9-22 October 1944, 6-19 November 1944 and 20 November-6 December 1944, *Hrvatski krugoval*, 9-22 October 1944.
- ⁴³ Mikac (1944), 22-23, 39.
- ⁴⁴ *Hrvatski slikopis*, 15 June 1942, 3.
- ⁴⁵ *Hrvatski slikopis*, 15 May 1942.
- ⁴⁶ *Hrvatski slikopis*, 1 January 1944, 2.
- ⁴⁷ *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 20: 2, 1 July 1943, 295, *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 8: 1941-1942, 1-2.
- ⁴⁸ *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 2: 2, 1 February 1943, 145-48, *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 2: 1941, 1941-42, 7.
- ⁴⁹ *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 12: 2, 15 December 1943, 169-70, *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 15-16: 2, 1 April 1943, 227-28, *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 8: 2, 15 December 1942, 122-23.
- ⁵⁰ *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 2: 2, 1 February 1943, 153-56.
- ⁵¹ *Spremnost*, 6 February 1944, *Hrvatski list*, 29 January 1943, *Gluma*, 1: 11, November 1944, 29, *Gluma*, 1: 3, November 1943, 31-32, *Hrvatski krugoval*, 8 October 1944, *Hrvatski slikopis*, 1 July 1944.
- ⁵² *Ustaša*, 3 July 1941.
- ⁵³ Pavlović (1944).
- ⁵⁴ Gloznić (1941).
- ⁵⁵ *Hrvatski narod*, 28 January 1945.
- ⁵⁶ *Nova Hrvatska*, 31 December 1941.

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- ⁵⁷ Some examples: Mihaljevec (1945), Jambresić (1945), *Pjesme hrvatskih vojnika* (1944), Branko (1942), 307-09.
- ⁵⁸ Kojaković (1943), Križanac (1943).
- ⁵⁹ Golik (1942).
- ⁶⁰ *Hrvatski šport*, 25 October 1944
- ⁶¹ *Hrvatski šport*, Christmas 1944, *Hrvatski šport*, 25 October 1944.
- ⁶² *Hrvatski narod*, 15 February 1945.
- ⁶³ *Nova Hrvatska*, 4 April 1943.
- ⁶⁴ *Hrvatski krugoval*, 12-25 February 1945, *Hrvatski krugoval*, 8-21 June 1944.
- ⁶⁵ *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 11: 25 January 1942, 6.
- ⁶⁶ *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 4: 1941-1942, 1-2.
- ⁶⁷ *Hrvatska sarajevska pozornica*, 11: 25 January 1942, 229-32.
- ⁶⁸ See, for example, *Hrvatski narod*, 25 July 1942.
- ⁶⁹ See, for example, Ibler (1943 a,b), Potočnjak (1943), Zemljak (1943), Strižić (1943).
- ⁷⁰ *Hrvatski narod*, 10 April 1944.
- ⁷¹ *Nova Hrvatska*, 10 April 1942.
- ⁷² *Nova Hrvatska*, Christmas 1942.
- ⁷³ See, for example, *Hrvatski narod*, 15 January 1945.
- ⁷⁴ Mikac (1944), 22-28.
- ⁷⁵ Mikac (1944), 32-34.
- ⁷⁶ *Hrvatski slikopis*, 2: 6, 1 May 1943, 3.
- ⁷⁷ Mikac (1944), 22-23, *Hrvatski slikopis*, 1: 1, 15 May 1942, 2.
- ⁷⁸ *Hrvatski slikopis*, 1: 1, 15 May 1942, 2.
- ⁷⁹ *Hrvatski slikopis*, 15 July 1942, 4, *Hrvatski slikopis*, 2: 2, 1 February 1943.
- ⁸⁰ *Hrvatski slikopis*, 15 July 1942, 4, *Hrvatski slikopis*, 1: 1, 15 May 1942, 2.
- ⁸¹ See, for example, *Hrvatski list*, 29 July 1943.
- ⁸² GRP/NDH/44/237/IV/22/59/44.
- ⁸³ See, for example, *Spremnost*, 17 April 1944.
- ⁸⁴ *Hrvatski slikopis*, 3: 4, 1 April 1944, 5.
- ⁸⁵ *Hrvatski slikopis*, 2: 8, 1 August 1943, 3, *Hrvatski slikopis*, 2: 8, 1 August 1943, 2.
- ⁸⁶ *Hrvatski slikopis*, 3: 8, 1 August 1944.
- ⁸⁷ *Hrvatski slikopis*, 3: 7, 1 July 1944, 2, *Hrvatski slikopis*, 4: 1-2, February 1945, 3.
- ⁸⁸ *Hrvatski slikopis*, 4: 3, March 1945, 2.
- ⁸⁹ *Spremnost*, 10 January 1942.
- ⁹⁰ Nikolić (1942), 9.
- ⁹¹ Čović (1942), 113-15.
- ⁹² Čović (1942), 115.

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- ⁹³ *Spremnost*, 26 September 1943, Starčević (1943), 7-31.
- ⁹⁴ Nikolić (1942 d), 191-6.
- ⁹⁵ Pavelić (1944), 241,
- ⁹⁶ *Hrvatski list*, 17 January 1943.
- ⁹⁷ Bauer, 2 (1943), 1014-1025.
- ⁹⁸ See, for example, *Spremnost*, 13 December 1942, Seitz (1943), 275-77.
- ⁹⁹ GRP/NDH/1/237/1942-5/VT/358/42.
- ¹⁰⁰ Freeburg (1989), 41-53.
- ¹⁰¹ See, for example, the paintings in the catalogue of the Second Exhibition of Croatian Artists in the Independent State of Croatia. *Druga izložba hrvatskih umjetnika u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj*, 22 XI - 13 XII 1942.
- ¹⁰² Veža (1942), Babić (1942).
- ¹⁰³ Zrnovački and Neugebauer (1942), Likan (1942), Topolčić (1942)
- ¹⁰⁴ Cvitan (1942 a), 256.
- ¹⁰⁵ Nikolić (1942 c), 261.
- ¹⁰⁶ Jurčić (1942 a), 122, Jurčić (1943 b).
- ¹⁰⁷ Cvitan (1942 b).
- ¹⁰⁸ Škarpa (1943 b), 100-2.
- ¹⁰⁹ Erčegović (1941).
- ¹¹⁰ Jurčić (1944 a), 97-98.
- ¹¹¹ Trontl (1941 b), 507.
- ¹¹² Marić (1943), 100.
- ¹¹³ Skračić (1941).
- ¹¹⁴ Skračić (1941), Sablić (1941).
- ¹¹⁵ *Mlada Hrvatica* (1941), M. (1941)
- ¹¹⁶ Anonymous (1941 a), Zyr Xapula (1941).
- ¹¹⁷ Pavlović (1941), 20-21.
- ¹¹⁸ Nazor (1942), 1.
- ¹¹⁹ Slade-Silović (1941), 263.
- ¹²⁰ Klarić (1941), 308.
- ¹²¹ Kos (1942 a), 89.
- ¹²² Lendić (1942), 292-3.
- ¹²³ Đarmati (1942 a), 296.
- ¹²⁴ Zdunić (1944).
- ¹²⁵ Kos (1944 b).
- ¹²⁶ Skračić (1945 a, c), n.p.
- ¹²⁷ Dunavski (1944).

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- ¹²⁸ Kos (1945), Marčinko (1945), Katalenčić (1944-5), 334.
- ¹²⁹ Pavičić (1943), 56, Joženko (1945), Alfirević (1944).
- ¹³⁰ Velebit (1944), Kos (1943), 444-5.
- ¹³¹ Klarić (1945 a,b), n.p.
- ¹³² Skračić (1945 b), n.p.
- ¹³³ Skračić (1944), 475-79, Krklec (1944), 57.
- ¹³⁴ Vlaisavljević (1942), 27.
- ¹³⁵ Kos (1942 b), 344.
- ¹³⁶ Katalenić (1942), 292.
- ¹³⁷ Skračić (1942 b), 54.
- ¹³⁸ Mujezinović (1942).
- ¹³⁹ Jambresić (1945)
- ¹⁴⁰ Jurčić (1944 b).
- ¹⁴¹ Sop (1943), 17-18, Klarić (1943 a), 209-10.
- ¹⁴² Klarić (1944 b).
- ¹⁴³ Klarić (1945 a).
- ¹⁴⁴ See, for example, Pavičić (1942), 283-290, Softa (1942), 74-6, Milković (1941).
- ¹⁴⁵ Budak, 1-2 (1941), Pavelić (1935), Vitezović (1935).
- ¹⁴⁶ See, for example, Peroš (1943), Prujak (1943).
- ¹⁴⁷ *Nova doba*, 13 February 1943.
- ¹⁴⁸ *Nova doba*, 23 January 1943.
- ¹⁴⁹ Švel (1942).
- ¹⁵⁰ Đarmati (1941 b), 305.
- ¹⁵¹ The cult of King Zvonimir is discussed in Žanić (1995), 90-122 in which this quote is cited, *ibid*, 101.
- ¹⁵² Šenoa (1941).
- ¹⁵³ Kljaković (1943 b, d).
- ¹⁵⁴ Grgec (1943 b), 80-5.
- ¹⁵⁵ See, for example, Mihanović (1943).
- ¹⁵⁶ *Nova Hrvatska*, 15 January 1944, *Spremnost*, 16 January 1944, Livadić (1944), 108-9.
- ¹⁵⁷ Anonymous (1942 b), Škarpa (1943 a), 106-7. See also Klarić's religious operetta about King Tomislav's coronation, Klarić (1942 c), 11-19.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Nova Hrvatska*, 11 September 1942.
- ¹⁵⁹ Polonjio (1942), 221-224.
- ¹⁶⁰ *Nova Hrvatska*, 9 September 1942.
- ¹⁶¹ Binički (1942), Nikolić (1942 b).
- ¹⁶² Šišul (1942), 5-7.

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- ¹⁶³ *Nova Hrvatska*, 12 June 1943.
- ¹⁶⁴ Pejnović (1942 a), 47-50, Šišul (1942), 42-43.
- ¹⁶⁵ *Nova Hrvatska*, 23 May 1943, Jurčić (1943 c).
- ¹⁶⁶ Kušan (1942), 180-2.
- ¹⁶⁷ Grgec (1943 a), 349-53.
- ¹⁶⁸ Ladika (1943), 446-9.
- ¹⁶⁹ Nikolić (1942 a) 309-18, Peroš (1942), 310-19.
- ¹⁷⁰ See, for example, Šenoa (1942 a), 251-5, Hrambašić (1942), 284-5, 96-7, Kranjčević (1942), 187-9.
- ¹⁷¹ Grgec (1941).
- ¹⁷² *Hrvatski narod*, 9 May 1941, *Nova Hrvatska*, 14 May 1944.
- ¹⁷³ Wiesner (1943), 20, Zdunić (1943), Polonijo (1942), 233.
- ¹⁷⁴ Cited in Horvat (1962), 414.
- ¹⁷⁵ Milković (1939), 25.
- ¹⁷⁶ Machiedo (1981), 332-3.
- ¹⁷⁷ Čović (1941), 235-8.
- ¹⁷⁸ Examples of the work of Tin Ujević published by Ustasha journals include: Ujević (1941 b), 182, Ujević (1944), Ujević (1941 a, c), 64-5, 67.
- ¹⁷⁹ *Hrvatski narod*, 10 July 1943.
- ¹⁸⁰ Cited in Gajević (1988). 186. Ujević's work and its reception in the Independent State of Croatia is discussed *ibid*, 184-86.
- ¹⁸¹ Brajković (1942), 14.
- ¹⁸² Kozarčanin (1942 a, b), 251, 254.
- ¹⁸³ *Hrvatski narod*, 17 May 1941, Vutuc (1941), 368.

Conclusion

By the beginning of 1945, the Independent State of Croatia was close to collapse. In fact, the control of the Ustashas throughout the state was so limited that the Poglavnik earned himself the dubious sobriquet, the “Mayor of Zagreb.” As the state deteriorated, divisions amongst the Ustasha hierarchy became increasingly public and their rhetoric ever more extreme; they began to see enemies everywhere, especially in their own ranks. In September 1944, two leading Ustasha functionaries—Mladen Lorković and Ante Vokić—had been arrested, ostensibly for mounting a coup against the Poglavnik. It is unlikely any coup was planned. However, it appears that, sensing that the Ustasha state was doomed, Lorković and Vokić had attempted to instigate negotiations with the Allies with a view to salvaging a future independent Croatia. In such a pro-Allied Croatia there would, of course, be no place for the Poglavnik or the extreme “Ras” Ustasha element. What the incident revealed yet again was the fundamental divisions which existed between Ustasha factions. The arrest of Vokić and Lorković heralded a ruthless cleansing of the Ustasha Movement itself and the arrest and summary execution of all those considered to have adopted a “soft” (i.e. pro-Allied) stance. A wave of terror and purges swept the state.¹

In a speech at the Workers’ Chamber on 8 September 1944 in an atmosphere of heightened hysteria, the Poglavnik railed against all those members of the Ustasha movement, who he alleged were, with “Great Serb Chetniks,” planning a coup against the State. He promised they would be defeated; the Ustasha Youth simply urged the Poglavnik to execute the Putschists.² The purges were a sign of creeping panic. As the state crumbled around them, the Ustashas tried to rally the nation with a call to unity couched in the language of fear. They aimed to strike terror into citizens by evoking harrowing memories of inter-war Yugoslavia and reminding ordinary Croatians of its social inequality, its authoritarianism, its political repression and its perceived discrimination against Croatia. Communist Yugoslavia, they warned, would be even worse. The rule of the Partisans would mean the victory of Greater Serb Orthodoxy and the destruction of the Catholic

Church;³ the identity of Croatia would be wiped from existence and the Croatian people were facing biological extermination;⁴ as members of a state supported by Nazi Germany, the Croatians would be punished collectively as war criminals and even their national heroes such as Starčević and Gubec would be declared fascists and criminals.⁵ (By contrast, some ideologues argued that to be labelled war criminals demonstrated the militancy and patriotism of the Ustashas.⁶) More than this, the entire pattern of traditional rural Croat life would be destroyed: they painted a nightmare world of children forcibly separated from parents, of peasant *zadrugas* transformed into *kolhozes* and families forced onto the road or transported as slave labour to the Urals and Siberia.⁷ The regime also made sure that their journals and newspapers were deluged by reports of atrocities committed by atheist Communists against Catholic priests. In tribute to them, the official journal of the Movement proclaimed them “our Ustashas, our heroes, our martyrs.”⁸

In the last weeks of the regime, the Ustashas arranged rallies and public demonstrations in support of the state and intellectuals, students, priests, workers and artists all publicly declared their intention never to surrender to the Communists.⁹ Simultaneously, all discriminative laws against Jews and Serbs were abandoned and they were now informed they were “equal” and protected citizens of the State who should rally to its defence.¹⁰ The Ustashas also made plans for a final resistance: they created national militias and enlisted workers to dig trenches and bunkers, vowing that should the Partisans invade their state, they would take to the hills and spearhead a national resistance movement which would use guerrilla tactics to defeat the occupying enemy.¹¹

Despite the fact that many Ustasha newspapers told their readers that a Croatian state still existed and that the moment of final victory was closer than ever, the Ustashas’ propaganda suggested otherwise.¹² By 1945, Croatian army newspapers were reporting woods full of fighters “organising a decisive war” and a national uprising against the Partisan authorities, but such rhetoric simply illustrated how dramatically the situation of both sides had changed: the Partisan guerrillas were now, for the most part, the government and the Ustasha regime

the rebels and insurgents just as they had been in the 1930s.¹³ There was also a recourse to the kind of fanatical and chiliastic language which had defined the early years of the Movement.¹⁴ Many Ustashas, especially the younger, more radical elements, did indeed fight heroically and fanatically to the bitter end, making the ultimate sacrifice for a hopeless cause in areas as hostile to the regime as Banja Luka and Dalmatia.¹⁵ Yet it was not enough. In a macabre portent of future events, on the occasion of what was to be the last celebration of the founding of the Ustasha state, the highest state honour, the medal of the Crown of King Zvonimir, was awarded not to live Ustasha warriors but, fittingly, dead heroes—Marko Hranilović, Ivan Rošić, Stipe Javor and Milan Šufflay—in recognition of their suffering and sacrifices during the period of Serbian “terror.” Within a month, the state which had honoured them was, itself, dead and the remnants of the Ustasha regime either fled, were executed or imprisoned.¹⁶

According to Partisan mythology, Communism had liberated Croatia from fascism and reunited the people of Yugoslavia in Brotherhood and Unity. One of the first acts of the new authorities was to “cleanse” Croatia of the old extremist regime. Ustasha functionaries and leaders were subject to show trials, which often resulted in the imposition of the death penalty.¹⁷ Mile Budak, Ivo Guberina, Radoslav Glavas, Mijo Bzik and Ademaga Mešić, for example, were all executed. Suspected collaborators were also purged from factories, schools and universities at the supposedly popular demand of workers, teachers and academics.¹⁸ As the Partisans needed to build a new Yugoslav culture, artistic and intellectual personalities from the Independent State of Croatia were also punished and excluded from professional life. Actors, composers, film makers, opera singers, writers and poets were all made an example of, and some, such as the popular singer Andrija Konč and the poet Branko Klarić were executed.¹⁹

If this process of ideological cleansing sounds familiar from the Ustasha era, this should not be surprising. Despite their very different ideologies, in some respects, the Ustashas and the Partisans were mirror-images of each other. They drew their support from the same urban working-class and peasant constituency and some later Partisans began their political activism as Ustashas;²⁰ they shared

a similar belief in the morality of the working man, extolled warrior values and embraced a strict moral outlook on life.²¹ The propaganda and rhetoric of the two movements was also strikingly similar. The appeal to national unity and the appropriation of historical and cultural figures as a legitimating tool were almost identical.²² The Partisans' language concerning the Ustashas—the proposition that they were a band of bloodthirsty murderers, bandits who had defiled the proud Croatian name, and servants of an alien ideology—was a simple inversion of Ustasha propaganda, now in the service of Communism, rather than fascism. Both ideologies were also rooted in a belief in a future utopia which would bring social justice and an equal society. Moreover, both the Partisans and the Ustashas were utterly fanatical and ruthless in pursuing their goals, seeing themselves as the expression of the wishes and yearnings of the entire nation and, at the same time, as an élite of persecuted and righteous martyrs.

This does not mean that the Partisans were ideologically and morally indistinguishable from the Ustashas. In terms of their national ideology, the Partisans were the antithesis of the Ustashas: officially at least, the Partisans believed in a multi-national Yugoslav state joined in brotherhood and unity; the Ustasha Movement, by contrast, were opposed to the very notion of South Slav solidarity. More importantly, although they were indeed guilty of committing some terrible atrocities during and immediately after the war, the Partisans were not an explicitly genocidal movement and victims of their violence tended to be political opponents or class enemies, not national minorities. By contrast, mass murder was an intrinsic aspect of the Ustashas' ideology. They believed not only that a war of terror against Serbs, Jews and gypsies was necessary to cement the loyalty of the population to the regime, but that it was also essential to the building of a new national society.

Why the masses were susceptible to ideological extremes, not just in Yugoslavia but in Europe generally in the first half of the twentieth century, is a question which historians have not satisfactorily addressed and in the Yugoslav context it has hardly been addressed at all. Of those that have, there has been little agreement. Some historians have argued that the answer lies not in politics but in

the psychology of the people of the South Slav region. Both in the past and the present, historians, travel writers and commentators from outside the region have proposed, like Vladimir Dvorniković's 1939 study of the Yugoslav mentality, that there is something unique in the "Balkan" psyche which makes it prone to outbursts of violence.²³ Others, following Cvijić, explain the political extremism as a result of human geography, citing the tradition of political violence and extremism in mountainous and isolated regions.²⁴ In the case of inter-war Croatia, at least one writer has explained the rise of the Ustasha Movement as a symptom of a society suffering from a collective national-psychological illness.²⁵ By contrast, Communist and Partisan historians usually resorted to dismissing the Ustasha leadership as class "reactionaries" and *déclassé* elements exploiting the simplicity and lack of education of oppressed peasants and the lumpen proletariat. None of the above theories are entirely convincing, not least because they are reductive and subject to too many exceptions. In one obvious way, if politics was related to geographical location, for example, then one would expect all people from the same location in Yugoslavia to have shared similarly extreme politics, yet they did not; nor were all people of a similar class drawn to extreme politics and, in fact, Yugoslavism, Ustashism and Communism gained support from all classes. In addition, if such extremism could be explained by a specific Balkan mentality, then how would one explain similar political radicalism in Italy and Germany, unless one accepts that there was also a particular Italian and German psyche, in which case the theory is rendered meaningless.

While, there is some truth in all of these arguments, the answer lies elsewhere. Both the rise of the Ustasha movement and the development of the anti-Yugoslav stance of the Communist Party occurred in the late 1920s and early 1930s when economic crisis, social stasis and national conflict were at their peak and the idea of a common Yugoslav state at its nadir. A united state had not been forced on the South Slavs by the victorious post-war great powers; it was the culmination of a process which had begun at least as far back as the mid-nineteenth century. When the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was declared in December 1918, ideologues burned with enthusiastic fervour and utopian ideas: they would

build a revolutionary democratic state and a revolutionary citizen: Yugoslavia and Yugoslavism would be an example to the rest of Europe of how a nation could transcend the bitterness and tribalism of the past and, on the ashes of war, create a multi-ethnic, pluralistic state. However, as political life in Yugoslavia ossified and political parties became increasingly conservative in their outlook, it became clear to those who had hoped for a radical break with the past that they were to be disappointed. Although the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, as it was after 1929, retained a spirit of cultural and even social experimentation, especially during the initial years of King Aleksandar's dictatorship, by the 1930s Yugoslavism was beginning to appear tired, banal and reactionary. By contrast, Communism and Croatian Ustashaism seemed dynamic, radical and militant. Many who had rallied to the vision of Yugoslavism, fundamentally disappointed, now looked to the Ustashes and the Communists to revolutionise society and lead the rebellion against the established order and its redundant democratic and capitalist values, just as previously they had looked to Yugoslavism to lead the struggle against the oppression of the Habsburg Empire. Social conditions and ideological vacuum, not national character or personality, led to the embrace of extremes.

The word "revolutionary" runs like a current through the ideologies of Yugoslavism, Ustashism and Communism. In all three ideologies, a revolutionary ideology not only disseminated its ideas through the medium of popular culture, but often defined itself in purely cultural terms, not surprising if it is remembered that Yugoslavism was a cultural movement long before it was political. This thesis has proceeded from the contention that fascism was a cultural rebellion as much as it was a political or ideological one: that is, that fascism's appeal lay not just in its ideological programme, but also its rhetorical style and aesthetic tastes. Fascism, itself an insurrection against conservatism, in adopting the language of militant socialism and rooting it in nationalist mythology, portrayed itself as a creed of eternal revolution and upheaval. When critics accuse fascists of never having developed a coherent set of principles, they are missing the point: fascism was an ideological reaction to the core principles of democratic liberalism. Its alternative cultural manifesto—destruction, warrior values, a fixation with death

and violence and the cult of the nation—were the only programme it needed. Fascism envisaged a new kind of heroic society which was both modern in that it looked forward to the new age and backwards in so far as it saw itself as a continuation of ancient warrior cultures. At the centre of the new society would be the much-fabled New Man. The creation of a New Man was also at the centre of the Ustashas' ideology. The Ustashas might have stressed the need for an independent state of Croatia and talked of building a utopian communitarian society, but the Ustasha revolution could only be implemented by creating a New Croatian Man, the herald of the new society, who would prove to his foreign oppressors that he was not the pacifist and weak man of stereotype but a warrior without mercy or pity. In other words, the Ustasha vision could be realised only through the creation of a new breed of men attuned to different ways of speaking, thinking and doing. Mass culture would be the engine of societal, ideological and national change in Croatia. Like Yugoslavism and fascism, the Ustasha ideology aimed to create a nationally-coherent society, free of the divisions of the past. Unlike Yugoslavism, and, to a certain extent, fascism, it chose genocide as the means of achieving this national unity and integration.

The influences which the Ustashas drew on were not restricted to fascist and Nazi ideology. As well as Yugoslavist ideas, their ideology also reflected cultural traditions, prejudices and currents prevalent in Croatian nationalism. Their promotion of peasant values and their appropriation of the teachings of Starčević and national and nationalist culture were an attempt to legitimate their rule; yet, they would not have used such propaganda if they did not think it would have been successful. That such propaganda must have, to a greater or lesser extent, succeeded is demonstrated by the fact that the Partisans appropriated so many of the same national heroes, mythologies and writers as the Ustashas. By contrast, in the Protectorate of Serbia, the attempt to appropriate national Serbian myths (such as the Kosovo myth) on behalf of the collaborationist regime of Milan Nedić was a complete failure.²⁶

This leads to the most difficult and problematic question of all: the extent to which ordinary Croats supported the Ustashas, either actively or passively.

Support for an independent state of Croatia or even *the* Independent State of Croatia was not synonymous with support for the Ustashas. Moreover, the Ustasha movement was not monolithic and contained many different ideological factions. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasise that even supporting the Ustashas or being an active Ustasha did not necessarily make one a supporter of the genocide with which the Ustashas have become indelibly linked. Indeed, there were numerous cases of Ustashas attempting to save persecuted citizens or refusing to implement Ustasha policy; some activists were even moved to resign from the Movement in moral disgust at the actions of its leading cadres.²⁷ In some instances, Ustashas themselves, as we have seen, fell victim to the very regime they had once been a part of. Yet the fact remains that the Ustashas, during the existence of the Independent State of Croatia, exterminated over half a million Serbian, Jewish and gypsy civilians as well as Croatian and Muslim anti-fascist opponents, the vast majority of whom were innocent and defenceless civilians. Out of a pre-war population of two million in Croatia and Bosnia, over three hundred thousand Serbs alone were murdered. On the basis of statistics, such a monumental feat of genocide would have required not only a large number of executioners but also the acquiescence, at least, of a large proportion of the population, especially when it is taken into account that the Ustashas, unlike the Nazis, did not have the means for large-scale killing and were often hindered in their plans by Italian soldiers and German military commanders such as Edmund Glaise von Horsteneau.

Part of the problem in assessing the level of support for the Ustashas is that, as a movement, not a political party, they never stood in elections. Historians who seek to absolve the Croatian population from complicity in the crimes of the Ustashas often point out that until the end of the Yugoslav state, Croats had tended to support the Croatian Peasant Party, rather than more extreme Croatian parties, such as the Croatian National Socialist Party. While this might be true, it also needs to be added that by the late 1930s, a significant faction of the Peasant Party was extremely nationalistic and even racist and many members of its paramilitary auxiliaries joined the Ustashas after 1941. Since relatively little

research has been conducted on the Ustashes' system of control and its methods of coercion and conformity, the nature of Ustasha rule has often been misinterpreted. Though the Ustashes boasted that citizens were constantly under their watch, Ustasha rule proved often to be chaotic and less than total. On occasions, when the Ustashes angered Croatian citizens and collective national pride felt wounded, as demonstrated during the occupation of Dalmatia by the Italian Army in June 1941, ordinary Croats were not afraid to protest and demonstrate their displeasure. By contrast, with a few well-known examples, Croatian citizens did not protest the treatment of minorities in their state and, on many occasions, actively participated in that persecution. Some Croats were, no doubt, ideologically motivated but the evidence suggests that many Croats tolerated and even applauded ethnic persecution simply because they saw it as an opportunity either to repay personal grudges or to enrich themselves in a time of scarcity. At the same time, displeasure with certain aspects of the Ustashes' rule did not, as the private correspondence of citizens to the authorities shows, mean that they rejected all aspects of the Ustashes' rule.

Ustasha support was also localised: in Dalmatia and Slavonia, support for the Ustashes, with the exception of the lower clergy and clericalist youth, had always been weak; by contrast, in western Hercegovina, the Lika and the suburbs of Zagreb, much of the population rallied around the Ustashes until the bitter end and even the Partisans acknowledged that in some regions, they struggled to win recruits, especially amongst the young, although Partisan youth groups tended to conceal their Communist sympathies.²⁸ Even after the collapse of the Ustasha state in 1945, newspapers would still report that "fascist bandits" (the Ustashes and their sympathisers) continued to control parts of the Croatian and Bosnian countryside which would not have been the case had the Ustashes not enjoyed support. Nor does it appear that ideological considerations played a significant role in the decision of ordinary Croats to join the Partisans. Sociological factors, family associations and effective propaganda probably played a larger role. However, self-interest was also a motivating factor. By 1943, with the collapse of Italy, it was clear that the Ustasha state would not survive and that the Partisans

or some other ideological opponent of the Ustasha Movement would rule Croatia. Therefore, joining the Partisans was a guarantee of a secure future and immunity from prosecution after the war. For their part, the Partisans were not particular concerned about the past of their recruits and, until the collapse of the Croatian state, promised an amnesty for all those who left the Ustashes for the Partisans.

An examination of the ideology of the Ustasha Movement and the manner in which mass culture was used as a form of propaganda helps to explain why the Independent State of Croatia ultimately failed to sustain itself. Culture was not marginal as far as the Ustashes were concerned, nor was it simply a utilitarian tool of power: it was an integral part of their State both in the sense that the Ustashes aimed at creating a pure Croat culture – what they saw as a cultural state - and because their understanding of “culture” as a symbol of civilisation was so central to their ideology and self-image. The Ustashes believed that they were creating a society which would defend the values of the West against the barbarism of the East. Westernness was construed as both a geographical location and a mentality, and even the most violent of Ustashes believed that they were creating a state which would be a beacon of hope to other nations. In order to create this “cultural” state, the nation would have to be cleansed both physically and spiritually of all alien manifestations.

Initially, the idea of an independent Croatian state was popular and propaganda was used effectively to rally the population around the regime. In particular, the stereotype of Serbs and Jews as enemies of the state and as dangerous and foreign was sufficient to retain the loyalty of a significant proportion of the population and even at the end, as the state crumbled, large numbers of Croats were suitably fearful of what the victory of the Partisans would mean to flee with the ancien regime. During the existence of the state, citizens were happy to attend rallies during public holidays in a demonstration of national solidarity. The propaganda of the Ustashes only ceased to be effective when the contrast between what the Ustashes insisted to be the case and what the citizens experienced as daily reality became too great. Many citizens turned against the Ustasha movement when they began to believe that the Ustashes were no longer serving

the best interests of the Croatian nation. Especially within the Ustasha Youth and student movement, there was bitter criticism of such policies as ceding Dalmatia to the Italians. Yet it is also arguable that what really alienated youths was that in forming a subservient alliance with a greater power, and inviting an Italian duke to be king of Croatia, the Ustashas were demonstrating their inherent conservatism insofar as they were not only making Croatia a protectorate, but also creating a new dynastic system which the advent of the Ustashas' revolutionary creed was meant to eradicate.

To state that the Ustashas were not as marginal and unpopular as they are traditionally portrayed is not to argue that they were universally admired or to ascribe to the Croatian nation a collective guilt. Lack of resistance to a state does not imply active support. Yet, it does suggest a certain understanding on the part of the citizens for the aims of the Ustasha Movement and challenges the idea long advocated by Communist historians that the ideology of the Ustashas was alien and marginal. To claim that the Ustashas were isolated from Croatian society is, in any case, a specious argument. Men like Pavelić, Luburić and Francetić did not emerge in a vacuum: on the contrary, they were shaped by the national cultural-political milieu in which they were raised. If one accepts that at least some of the Ustashas' ideology was rooted in traditional Croat nationalism, then we also need to consider the regime under which so many of them were socialised and educated. Without this, they appear like a maddened parenthesis of Yugoslav history, an outbreak of village madness which cannot be explained. The Ustashas did not simply appear in 1941, nor did they simply disappear in 1945. They were born, raised and educated in the very same South Slav society and with the very same values of South Slav unity and brotherhood that they would later seek to destroy. Born, for the most part, in the years immediately before the creation of the Yugoslav Kingdom, for whatever reason, they came to see it not as liberating but as repressive and destructive. However, this violent rejection of South Slav brotherhood was partial and contradictory. The ideology of the Ustashas might have advocated a radical break with the ideals of Yugoslavism, but it was also inspired by the very same desire to resolve the national question; for their part,

the Partisans, who disdained both Royalist Yugoslavia and Ustasha Croatia, combined the national idealism of the former and the social utopia of the latter and borrowed extensively from the rhetoric and culture of both.

Examining the complexity of the Ustashes' ideology and the way in which they communicated that ideology does not mean it is necessary to minimise the magnitude of their crimes. However, moral outrage, for so long the prerequisite for those wishing to study the Ustashes, is not sufficient. Milan Kundera wrote: "The totalitarian spirit, the spirit of propaganda...reduces (and teaches others to reduce) the life of a hated society to the simple listing of its crimes."²⁹ If historians wish to better understand the Ustashes, why they came to power, why their policies developed in the way they did then it is necessary, as George Mosse argued, to study them from the inside out; in other words, to see them as they saw themselves. The Ustashes were not merely a savage horde of sadistic young men, as the German major to whom Corrado Zoli spoke called them. They genuinely believed they were ushering in a better world, a world in which the Croatian nation would not only regain its pride after decades of humiliation, but be saved from extermination. To comprehend what happened in the Independent State of Croatia and why it happened in the way that it did, the history of the Ustasha movement needs to be constantly assessed and reassessed, revised and reconfigured because, as the German novelist Christa Woolf warned in the memoir of her own Nazi childhood, "The past is not dead; it is not even past. It is *we* who separate ourselves from it and pretend that we are strangers."³⁰

NOTES

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- ¹ Kovačić (1968), 443-57, *Nova Hrvatska*, 2 September 1944.
- ² *Gospodarstvo*, 10 September 1944, Kovačić (1968), 221-29, Krizman, 1, (1983), 78-139.
- ³ *Hrvatski narod*, 22 March 1945.
- ⁴ *Hrvatski narod*, 11 February 1945.
- ⁵ *Hrvatski narod*, 7 February 1945, *Ustaša*, 3 December 1944, *Naša borba*, 15 January 1945.
- ⁶ *Hrvatski narod*, 11 February 1945.
- ⁷ See, for example, the caricatures in *Naša borba*, 15 January 1945.
- ⁸ *Ustaša*, Easter 1945.
- ⁹ *Hrvatski narod*, 20 March 1945, *Spremnost*, 16 February 1945,
- ¹⁰ Basta (1971) 203-5, *Vojnik*, 30 April 1945.
- ¹¹ *Nova Hrvatska*, 25 February 1945, *Hrvatski narod*, 18 January 1945, Krizman, 1 (1983), 275.
- ¹² *Naša borba*, 14 April 1945.
- ¹³ *Vojnik*, 1 March 1945, *Naš list*, 12 June 1944.
- ¹⁴ *Ustaša*, Easter 1945, 1.
- ¹⁵ *Hrvatski narod*, 25 January 1944, *Hrvatski narod*, 23 January 1944, *Hrvatski narod*, 31 December 1944.
- ¹⁶ Regarding the fate of Ustasha supporters after the collapse of the state, see Nikolić (1988) and Mijatović (1995), 29-36.
- ¹⁷ *Vjesnik*, 27 May 1945, *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 10 April 1945, *Vjesnik*, 18 July 1945.
- ¹⁸ *Vjesnik*, 11 June 1945.
- ¹⁹ A partial list of writers, artists and other cultural figures who were executed after the Partisans came to power, disappeared or otherwise suffered an uncertain fate can be found in Bogdan, Kesterčanek and Nikolić (1955), 345-390.
- ²⁰ In a report on the trial of Ustasha war criminals in 1945 all but one of those sentenced to death came from the working-classes and the peasantry. *Vjesnik*, 29 May 1945.
- ²¹ Avakumović, 1 (1964), 93-122.
- ²² *Vjesnik*, 20 June 1945.
- ²³ See, for example, Kaplan (1994). It has been effectively critiqued by Goldsworthy (1998).
- ²⁴ See, for example, Djilas (1996), 109.
- ²⁵ Trifković (1998), 273.
- ²⁶ Bondžić (2000), 77-90.
- ²⁷ The massacres of Serbs in eastern Bosnia by Francetić's Black Legion in 1942 led to the resignation of many local members of the Movement and even active Ustasha soldiers. See Duizjings (2002), 61-69.
- ²⁸ Zarić (1980), 48-58.

²⁹ Kundera (1995), 225.

³⁰ Woolf (1977), 9. My emphasis.

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Starčevića mladež, 1942-1943
Ustaša, 1934-1935
Ustaša, 1941-1945
Ustaška mladež, 1941-1945
Ustaškinja, 1942-1945
Vjesnik, 1945
Vrhbosna, 1941-1942
Vojnik, 1944-1945

Appendix A: The Organisation of Power in the Independent State of Croatia in 1941

The First Ustasha Government, April 1941

Ante Pavelić	Poglavnik Prime Minister
	Minister for Foreign Affairs
Slavko Kvaternik	Commander of Armed Forces
Andrija Artuković	Minister of Interior
Mirko Puk	Minister of Justice
Lovro Šušić	Minister for the National Economy
Ivica Frković	Minister for Forestry and Mines
Mile Budak	Minister of Religion and Cults
Jozo Dumandžić	Minister for Corporations
Ivan Petrić	Minister for Public Health
Osman Kulenović	Vice-President
Milovan Žanić	President of the Legislative Council

Sources: Jelić-Butić (1977), 104, 199; Krizman (1978), 27; Hory and Broszat (1964), 75-92; Cohen (1997), 156.

Main Ustasha Headquarters (Glavni ustaški stan – GUS), April 1941

Council of the Deputy Chiefs of Staff

Andija Betlehem

Mile Budak

Marko Došen, President

Slavko Kvaternik

Luka Lešić

Stjepan Matijević

Ademaga Mešić

Corp of Adjutants

Mijo Bzik

Ivan Javor

Blaž Lorković

Ivan Oršanić

Alija Šuljak, Chief

Commissars

Zdenko Blažeković

Božo Cerovski

Danijel Crljen

Mira Dugački

Drago Dujmović

Tomislav Grčinić

Vlado Herceg

Mato Jagodić

Vlado Jonić

Šime Cvitanović
Nikola Jurišić
Eugen Dido Kvaternik
Franjo Laslo
Vjekoslav Luburić
Frane Miletić
Vilko Pečnikar
Grga Pejnović
Ivan Pregrad
Branko Rukavina
Aleksandar Seitz
Vladimir Singer
Marijan Šimić
Ante Štitić

Sources: Jelić-Butić (1977), 109, 179; Colić (1973), 95.

**Appendix B: Population Demographics and Losses in the
Independent State of Croatia amongst Major Ethnic and National
Groups, 1941-1945**

Croatia	Serbs	Croats	Muslims	Jews
Population before 1941	633,000	2,481,000	-	20,124
No of dead, 1941-1945	93,214	69,446	-	17,324
No. of dead as % of all casualties	50.2%	37.4%	-	11.5%
No. of dead as % of ethnic population	14.7%	2.79%	-	86.6%

Bosnia	Serbs	Croats	Muslims	Jews
Population before 1941	1,013,000	522,000	718,000	11,000
No of dead, 1941-1945	110, 943	6,291	25,625	10,622
No. of dead as % of all casualties	72.3%	4.1%	16.7%	6.0%
No. of dead as % of ethnic population	11.0%	1.2%	3.6%	96.5%

Sources: Bogoslavljević (1995); Zerjavić (1989); Kočović (1985)

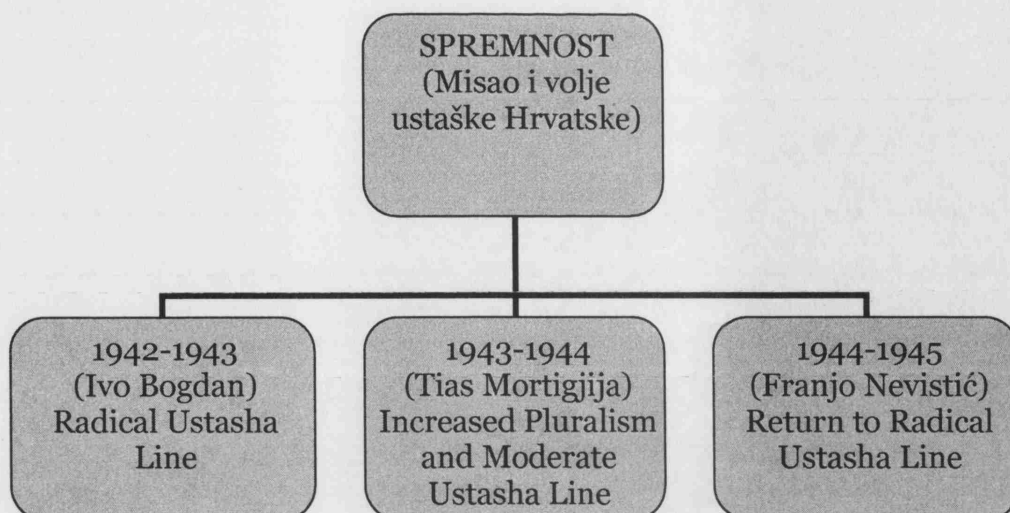


Fig. 1. The political evolution of the newspaper, *Spremnost*, 1942-1945 under its three editors (the names of the editors are in brackets)

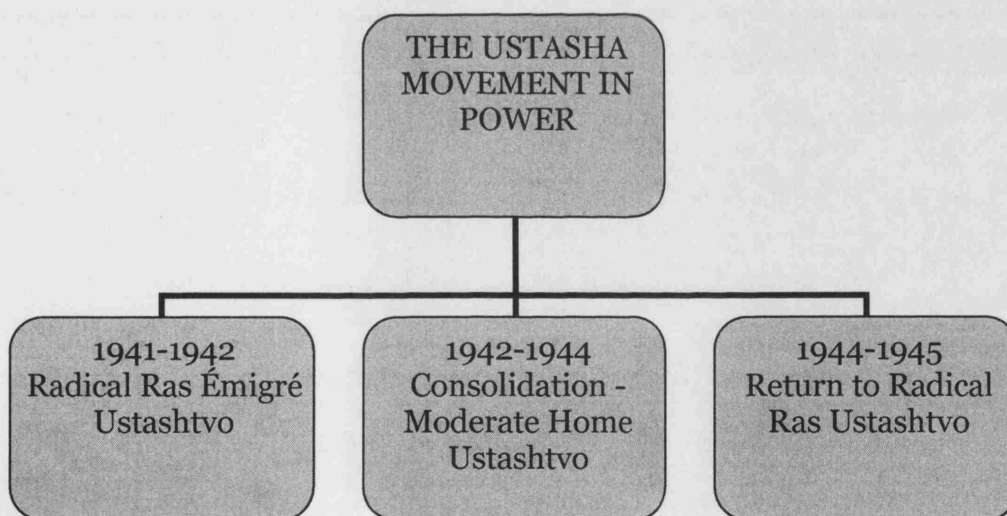


Fig. 2. The Political Evolution of the Revolutionary Ustasha Movement (after 1941 renamed the Ustasha Liberation Movement)